

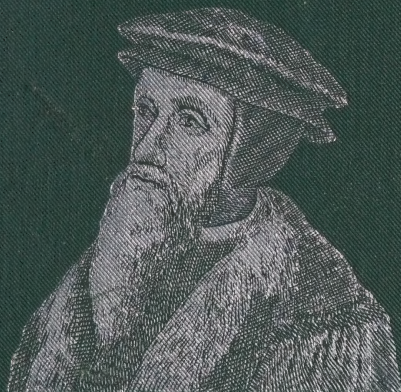
CALVIN, TWISSE & EDWARDS

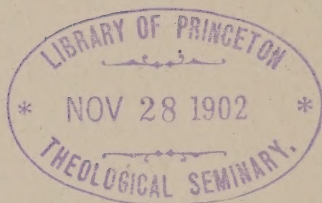
ON

UNIVERSAL SALVATION OF INFANTS



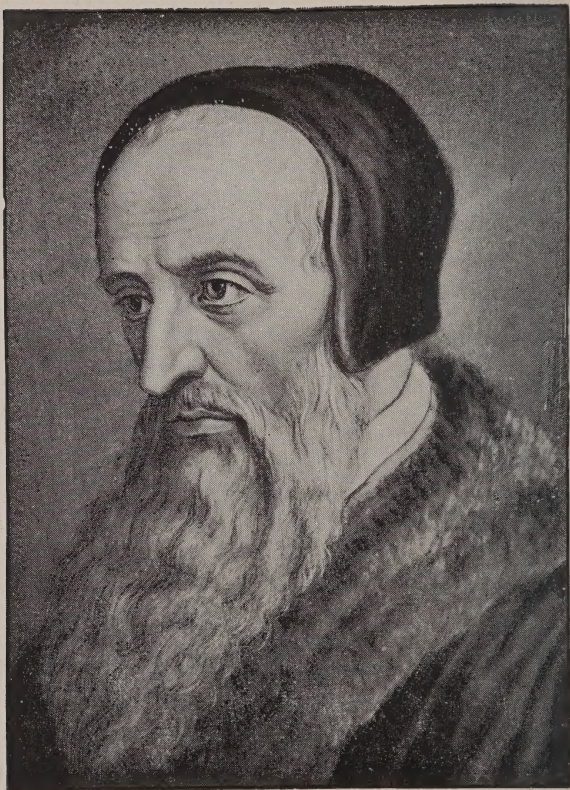
JOHN · WELDON · STAGG





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on the universal salvation

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JOHN CALVIN.

Calvin, Twisse and Edwards
on The Universal Salvation
of Those Dying in Infancy

BY
✓
REV. JOHN W. STAGG, D. D.



RICHMOND, VA.
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MRS. EDWARD D. LATTA,
HAVING BEEN CONVINCED BY AN ARTICLE
OF MINE THAT JOHN CALVIN DID NOT
HOLD THE HORRIBLE OPINIONS CHARGED
TO HIM, WROTE ME A LETTER, FULL OF THE
EXPRESSION OF THE JOY OF A MOTHER'S
HEART AT FINDING THE TEACHING OF THIS
GREAT AND GOOD MAN ON THE SALVATION
OF INFANTS ENTIRELY DIFFERENT FROM
WHAT SHE HAD SUPPOSED, AND URGED
ME TO WRITE SOMETHING THAT MIGHT
BE USED IN ENLIGHTENING THE PEOPLE.

To her

I, THEREFORE, DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

PREFACE.

IN closing his treatise on *Infant Baptism and Infant Salvation in the Calvinistic System*, Dr. C. P. Krauth makes a sweeping challenge. "We request any and all defenders of [Westminster] Calvinism to produce a solitary Calvinistic standard or divine, from the First Helvetic Confession to the Westminster Confession, or from Calvin to Twisse, the prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly, in which, or by whom, it is asserted or implied that all who die in infancy are certainly saved."

After convincing myself that this challenge could be easily met, I set myself to the task of ascertaining whether the general impression that prevails among the people on this subject was due to reading the standards of the church, and the writings of the reformers, or to reading such works as Dr. Krauth's and others. In my

PREFACE.

association with men, in business, in pleasure, in travel, in railroad carriages and in ships on the sea, I have never found one who could cite me to a single passage that he had not come by second hand. I often travelled when none of the company supposed I was either a minister of the gospel, or even cared anything about the opinions of Calvin and those who teach the Calvinistic system. I assumed ignorance at other times, and asked to be put in possession of the information that would enable me to refute those bigots who had the temerity to deny a conclusion so confirmed by the standards and the writings of the men who had moulded opinion on this subject. I was invariably referred to such works as I have alluded to. The great majority of people believe the Presbyterian Church teaches the doctrine of the reprobation of infants from the impression that has been made in conversation and by lectures directed to the abuse of Calvinism, and have never read a line either in hostile or friendly works.

PREFACE.

I found men high in the Presbyterian Church, as well as learned men in other denominations, grossly ignorant of the writings and opinions of the men of whom I write.

Therefore, I have thought I might be doing a service for truth if I should put the result of my investigations in a readable form.

The reader will find much to criticise, and the reasoning, at times, difficult to follow, but I am led to believe he will find the conclusion irresistible.

AUTHOR.

July 23, 1902.

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CALVIN, TWISSE AND EDWARDS ON INFANT SALVATION.

CHAPTER I.

THE DISTINCTIVE SYSTEMS.

IF these men had been Pelagians, we should know at once what to expect their opinions on the salvation of those dying in infancy would be. Whether they were supralapsarian or infralapsarian, or whether they were traducianist or creationist, does not come within the limits of this inquiry. The former relates to the order of the decrees, and the latter to the manner of our coming into condemnation. The system of doctrine held to by these men is, therefore, the most important point from which to begin our investigation, because, if the system itself admits of infants being saved, or does not admit of their being saved, we have largely determined for, or we have completely determined against, the proof of the claim we hope to establish.

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Each of the men whose opinion we propose to examine was Calvinistic in the same sense that the one was whose name the system bears. Nothing is to be gained, therefore, from a "modified Calvinism."

We make inquiry, first, then: Into what classes does the Calvinistic system divide the human race, when the doctrines that bear on this subject are the view points?

(a) Regarded from the point of original sin, the race is contained in one class, viz., those condemned to death (Romans v. 14): "Death reigned even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression."

(b) From the point of predestination, there can be but two classes of persons, viz., those elected to life, and those reprobated.

(c) Looked at from the point of election, two classes only are possible, viz., the elect, and the non-elect.

(d) From the point of foreknowledge, since knowledge cannot cause an act, and since there can be no just complaint against the Creator for not being ignorant of futurity, all that can be said is, God most certainly knew who would be saved, and who would not be, when he created man.

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(*e*) The final perseverance of the saints can only bear upon those who endure to the end, and are finally brought into the kingdom, leaving those who do not persevere, and are consequently among the reprobate.

All being born into a condition wherein they might be justly damned, and none being re-secured therefrom but by the "only Redeemer," let us ascertain whom the scriptures warrant us in entertaining hope for.

Regarding the race from the condition of infancy, before any have had opportunity to manifest their disposition, either in good or bad works—

We find those regenerated in the womb, as was John the Baptist, and, consequently, never knew when they were born again.

There are those, also, who pass out of the infant state, and are renewed by the Spirit, by the ordinary means of grace, as were all the New Testament converts.

There are those who pass out of the infant state, and become reprobate adults, as was Esau.

And there are those who die in infancy. This class is as large as the other three combined.

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It is of vital importance, therefore, that we ascertain if anything in the Calvinistic system denies salvation to so great a multitude.

The Romish system—too Pelagian to think that original sin could bring the positive pains of eternal death, and too tenacious of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration to concede that an infant can be saved without that rite—consigns infants to a dreary limbo, or to hell; for both theories are held under this system.

The Episcopal Church, while having the Thirty-nine Articles as a part of its system, is so far Calvinistic, but the doctrine of baptismal regeneration restricts the teaching of this church, on this subject, to those who are brought under the baptismal covenant.

“The Protestant advocates of baptismal regeneration, without committing themselves to the Romish theory of an *opus operatum*, hold that by baptism the guilt of original sin is removed. Every infant is regenerated when baptized. If he dies in infancy, the seed is actualized in paradise. If he lives to adult age, its result depends upon the use of it.”—*Blunt's Dict. of Theology*.

The Lutheran system accepts baptism as the ordinary channel through which the Holy Spirit works a change in the nature of a child, and the attempt to relieve the system by implying that some other way may be observed with

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the unbaptized, does not in the least get rid of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration.

It is claimed that James Arminius taught the doctrine of infant salvation. A study of his life and times reveals the fact that he got no further than the denial of an *absolute* predestination. Arminius died in 1609. The doctrine of works, in the Arminian system, makes it logically absurd to believe in infant salvation. It is a fact that Arminians believe it, but they believe it in the face of logic, *i. e.*, they do not go to the logical conclusion from their premise. This may be done, and not imply untruth in intent, but fault in doctrine. We believe that John Wesley's writings will show that he believed in the salvation of all infants; but the following creates a suspicion stronger than anything in Calvin's writing, to the contrary:

"If infants are guilty of original sin, then they are the proper subjects of baptism, seeing in the ordinary way they cannot be saved unless this be washed away by baptism. It has been already proved that this original stain cleaves to every child of man, and that they thereby are children of wrath, and liable to eternal damnation."—*Treatise on Baptism* (1756).

Calvinism is the only system of theology that can with logical consistency declare the salvation of all dying in infancy.

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CALVIN'S WRITINGS EXAMINED.

Dr. John A. Broadus was fond of telling how his father proved, from the Bible, "There is no God." Calling his son to him, and placing his finger over the first line of the fourteenth Psalm, it read, "There is no God." The boy was satisfied: the Bible said it, and that ended it. When his father removed his finger, it read, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." It has occurred to us that this is not an unfair illustration of the manner of proof offered in the discussions of Calvin's writings regarding infant salvation.

We propose to show from Calvin's writings that he states in language as unmistakable as "There is no God" that infants are damned, and to prove from the context that the declaration is as foreign and untrue to his mind, regarding those dying in infancy, as the above declaration is to the mind and context of the Bible.

Calvin wrote in times of controversy, and much of his writing is controversial, and the figure of hypothesis is frequently used. In proving the justice of God's decrees, hypothetical sentences are used too severe not to be

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repellent. Many such passages are found involving the destiny of infants. The failure of regarding them in this light has given the impression of the harshness of Calvinism that many have who know little of this system.

We undertake to show that Calvin states positively that infants are damned, and that he exempts from damnation those dying in infancy.

The first writing of consequence Calvin gave to the world was his *Institutes*; the last important literary work of his life was the revising of the *Institutes*. These, then, may be consistently termed the alpha and omega of his writings, having revised the *Institutes* in 1559, just five years before he died. His works are voluminous; many of his essays and sermons remain as he left them, and have never been published in any form, unless they have been included in the edition of his works recently published at Berlin. The work that bears his own mark as expressing his final opinions should constitute authority for his beliefs. To these *Institutes* we first appeal for proof of our proposition.

It is easy to see that, in Calvin's clear and bald method of stating the distinctive features

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of his system, he is concerned with the system itself, independent of any consequences that may follow from an honest statement of any of the points confirming the system as a whole. His statements, therefore, may, and do, fail to take cognizance of any issue save the one in hand. Foreknowledge and predestination, for instance, are stated by him in such manner as to establish the doctrines as facts, and leave many questions unanswered in consequence of such statement; among the unanswered questions is notably the one of the destiny of infants.

“When we attribute foreknowledge to God, we mean that all things have ever been, and perpetually remain, before his eyes, so that to his knowledge nothing is future or past, but all things are present; and present in such manner that he does not merely conceive of them from ideas formed in his mind, as things remembered by us appear present to our mind, but really beholds and sees them as if actually placed before him. And this foreknowledge extends to the whole world, and to all the creatures. Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which he has determined in himself what he would have to become of every individual of mankind; for they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say he is predestined either to life or death.”—*Institutes*, Book III., Chap. XX.

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Here Calvin is zealous for this doctrine alone. The context shows that he was making a statement to oppose those who were attempting to make foreknowledge the cause of predestination. To relieve the doctrine of this, and this alone, he so states it; that there are other difficulties he does not hesitate to declare, for he says, "It is involved in many cavils." What we maintain is, that, so far as the statement of this doctrine is concerned, there was no room to except infants dying in infancy, or any others. The two classes are the predestinated to life and the predestinated to damnation, and the doctrine taken alone includes, in these two classes, infants, for he elsewhere shows that they are so predestinated before they are born.

He further states, in arguing the doctrine with those opposed to it:

"But as these virulent adversaries are not content with one species of opposition, we will reply to them all as occasion shall require. Foolish mortals enter into many contentions with God, as though they could arraign him to plead their accusations.

"In the first place, they inquire by what right the Lord is angry with his creatures who had not provoked him by any previous offence; for that to devote to destruction whom he pleases is more like the caprice of a tyrant than the lawful sentence of a judge; that men have reason, therefore, to expostulate with God, if they

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are predestinated to eternal death, without any demerit of their own, merely by his sovereign will. If such thoughts ever enter the minds of pious men, they will be sufficiently enabled to break their violence by this one consideration—how exceedingly presumptuous it is only to inquire into the causes of the divine will, which is in fact, and is justly entitled to be, the cause of everything that exists.”—*Institutes*, Book III., Chap. XXIII.

Here it is clear that no distinction, other than the two classes of the predestinated to life and to death, is in his mind. That this statement was meant by Calvin to include infants, we shall presently show. He bases the doctrine on the will of God, and nothing else.

Discussing the fall, we find strikingly given Calvin's views on its consequences to infants:

“ But whether they wish it or dread it, predestination exhibits itself in Adam's posterity. For the loss of salvation by the whole race through the guilt of one parent, was an event that did not happen by nature. What prevents their acknowledging concerning one man what they reluctantly grant concerning the whole species? Why should they lose their labor in sophistical evasion? The scripture proclaims that all men were, in the person of their father, sentenced to eternal death. This, not being attributable to nature, it is evident, must have proceeded from the wonderful counsel of God. The perplexity and hesitation, discovered at trifles, by these pious defenders of the justice of God, and their facilities in overcoming great difficulties, are truly absurd.

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“ I inquire, again, how it came to pass that the fall of Adam, independent of any remedy, should involve so many nations, with their *infant children*, in eternal death *but because such was the will of God*. It is an awful decree, I confess; but no one can deny that God foreknew the future final fate of man before he created him, and that he did foreknow it because it was appointed by his own decree. If any one here attacks God’s foreknowledge, he rashly and inconsiderately stumbles; for what ground of accusation is there against the Heavenly Judge for not being ignorant of futurity? If there is any just or plausible complaint, it lies against predestination; nor should it be thought absurd to affirm that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and the ruin of his posterity in him, but also arranged all by the determination of his own will.”
—*Institutes*, Book III., Chap. XXIII.

From this it is explicit that Calvin believed the fall involved man in a literal ruin. It was no fiction of thought, capable of being explained away by after considerations. His statement is that the consequences of the fall involved the species in death, and its literalness is not to be explained by supposing a remedy. What Calvin does is this: he states the bearing of predestination, on the fall, in such baldness as to make it impossible for any to escape, infant or adult, and he assigns no reason but the will of God. We argue that it can be proved, not alone from sentences, but from the

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context, so far as the subject thus handled extends, that he teaches infant damnation.

We now come to the bearing of this doctrine on divine justice. We wish to show that, in his statement of it, not only his sentences, but the context proves that infants are damned, and were we left without his words in the discussion of infant regeneration and baptism, we should necessarily be compelled to admit that Calvin taught the damnation of infants dying in infancy. In his statement he is opposed by those who argue the injustice of God; to which he replies by proving that the question of justice is not involved.

“Therefore, if any one attacks us with such an inquiry as this—why God has from the beginning predestinated some men to death, who, not yet being brought into existence, could not deserve the sentence of death—we reply by asking them in turn, what they suppose God owes to man, if he chooses to judge of him from his own nature. As we are all corrupted by sin, we must necessarily be odious to God, and that not from tyrannical cruelty, but in the most equitable estimation of justice. If all whom the Lord predestinates to death are, in their natural condition, liable to the sentence of death, what injustice do they complain of receiving from him?”

“First, all must admit what Solomon says—‘The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil’ (Prov. xvi. 4). Now, since the arrangement of all things is in the hand of God;

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since to him belongs the disposal of life and death, he arranges all things by his sovereign counsel, in such a way that individuals are born who are doomed from the womb to certain death, and are to glorify him by their destruction.”—*Institutes*, Book III., Chap. XXIII., 6.

THE COVENANT AND ORIGINAL SIN.

Before we proceed farther, it will be necessary to show that neither Calvin’s teaching on the covenant, or on original sin, precludes universal infant salvation; for when we have established that Calvin and others held to the salvation only of the infants of believers, we have rather added to than detracted from the horror of their teaching on this subject. So, if we can show that Calvin affirms that the covenant does not warrant in believing in the salvation of the believer’s child only, we will be on the way to finding where we are warranted in grounding our belief in his teaching the salvation of all dying in infancy.

In considering the writing of Calvin on the salvation of all infants under the covenant, we shall be compelled to admit that he regarded alien or heathen infants as savable as federate or Christian infants by means of their mere infancy, and by the power of the Holy Spirit to regenerate them, and acknowledge that the

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new covenant in Christ is to include the salvation of all dying in infancy; or else we must conclude that uncovenanted infants, neither for the sin of Adam, nor for the sin of their own parents, can be excluded from the election of God, and the redemption of Christ.

That he had no doubt of the salvation of the infants of believers is easily shown by abundant quotations only a few, however, need be cited.

“The salvation of infants is included in the promise in which God declares to believers that he will be a God to them and to their seed. In this way he declared that those deriving descent from Abraham were born to him. In virtue of this promise they are admitted to baptism, because they are considered members of Christ.”—*Tracts*, Vol. III.

“The offspring of believers is born holy, because their children, while yet in the womb, before they breathe the vital air, are included in the covenant of eternal life; nor, indeed, are they admitted into the church by baptism on any other ground than that they belonged to the body of Christ before they were born.”—*German Interim*, page 275.

“Wherefore, if we would not maliciously obscure the kindness of God, let us present to him our infants, to whom he has assigned a place among his friends and family—that is, the members of the church.”—*Institutes*, Book III., 32.

“I adduce another argument: that the salvation of the soul is by no means to be tied down to external signs; for what will remain for the blood of Christ, if

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we include spiritual life in water? I add, moreover, that infants are baptized because they are of the household of the church.”—*Tracts*, Vol. III., pages 347, 348.

“I verily admit that all die in Adam, and that infants, no less than adults, need the redemption of Christ, nor do I disapprove of the received practice of the church in running to baptism; only I think Augustine mistaken when, in fixing the danger, he cuts off all the hope of life from infants, whom the Lord declares to be his own, and to whom baptism would not be competent if they were not already called to the fellowship of the church by the promise of God.”—*Method of Reforming the Church*, page 554.

When some one expressed himself as distressed in his conscience because his child had died unbaptized, Calvin wrote him:

“Baptism is indeed the sign of salvation, and seal that we are accepted of God; but in either case we are inscribed in the book of life, as well by the free grace of God as by the promises. Our children accordingly are redeemed, for it is written, ‘I am the God of thy children’; otherwise, they would not be baptized. If your salvation, therefore, be secured by the promise, and be well grounded in itself, we cannot suppose the children who die before baptism to be lost. By giving too much honor to the outward sign we should offend God, and by supposing that our salvation is not sufficiently secured by his promise, we should throw a doubt upon his truth. There being no disrespect, then, to the sacrament on your part, no harm can happen to your child because it died before it was possible for you to bring it to baptism.”—*Life and Times of Calvin*, Henry, Vol. I., pages 473, 474.

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We recall an effort, in the earlier days of our ministry, when called on to offer consolation to a bereaved mother, of the German Lutheran Church, whose child had suddenly died without the seal of baptism, and as we read these firm, sensible, scriptural views of Calvin, clear as the ring of a silver bell, broad enough to give peace of mind for all dying in infancy, guarded enough to admonish every man not to despise the covenant of the Lord—how we wish we had known of them when we were trying to find our way in that darkness, where reverence is too often due to superstition, and where signs are too often mistaken for what they signify. This passage breaks forever the bands of baptismal regeneration, and settles forever that Calvin taught the salvation of all the dead infants of believers. The only question to be settled is, Did Calvin write anything that would lead men to believe that all other infants dying in infancy were saved? If he did, then Calvin, on this matter, was far in advance of some who teach in our theological seminaries at this good time. We think there is abundant evidence that he has so written.

Freed from the baptismal covenant, we will quote passages that should settle that he ex-

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tended salvation to those who could not claim benefit under it, and, therefore, Calvin conditions their salvation on the grace of Christ alone, which is the ground of all covenants, and superior to them all.

“Our Lord Jesus Christ—to give an example from which we might learn that he had come to enlarge rather than to limit the grace of the Father—kindly takes the little children in his arms, and rebukes his disciples for attempting to prevent them from coming, because they were keeping those to whom the kingdom of heaven belonged away from him, through whom alone there is access to heaven.”—*Institutes*, Book IV.

“Certainly the laying on of hands was not a trifling or empty sign, and the prayers of Christ were not idly wasted in air; but he could not present the infants solemnly to God without giving them purity. And for what did he pray for them, but that they might be received into the number of the children of God. Here it follows that they were received by the Spirit to the hope of salvation.”—*Com. Harmony*, Vol. II., page 389.

“If we insist on discussing the difference between our Saviour’s act and baptism, in how much higher esteem shall we hold baptism (by which we testify that infants are included in the divine covenant) than the taking up, embracing, laying hands on children, and praying over them—acts by which Christ, when present, declares both that they are his, and are sanctified by him.”—*Institutes*.

In this last quotation it is clear that, unless we extend the new covenant in Christ to all

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infants, unless the grace of Christ is separate from the baptismal covenant, and is superior to it, we have a command of God ignored by the Son, since Christ has not baptized the little children, nor mentioned the parental relation of them, and does not discriminate among them. Therefore, he embraces all infants in a universal benediction as heirs of this spiritual kingdom.

We are to bear in mind that the interpretation given to the old covenant limited the promises to the seed of Abraham, and that when, in the new covenant, we are taught that faith in Christ makes of all spiritual seed of Abraham, so there is in Christ's gospel that which enables God to claim all peoples everywhere, and that enables man to claim the promises independent of any lines of heredity through which the grace of God was formerly promised. This is that broad distinction which both Peter and Paul taught when they perceived that the gospel was for the world, and not for the Jew only. If, then, the children under the old covenant, before they were born, were reckoned the children of God, and if the sign of circumcision was not essential, because it only pointed to what infants already had, so,

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under the new covenant, all infants are counted as belonging to Christ, since he communicates his righteousness to them in a manner we do not understand, and consequently they have that to which baptism points, independent of the external sign; by which we mean that the New Testament declares the condition under the new covenant, for the adult, to be faith in Christ, so that under this covenant those who are capable of exercising faith, and do not exercise it, are consequently lost, just as those who were under the old covenant, and who sinned against God, did not have fulfilled to them the promises. Faith, then, is the only condition on which salvation is offered to the adult, and as infants cannot exercise faith, they must be counted saved either by hereditary rights, as was the literal seed of Abraham, or they must be saved by the mercy of God bestowed on whomsoever he wills. Unless this be true, it is folly for us to affirm that we are encouraged to hope that the infants of unbelievers are saved. Logically, it is impossible from the premises.

There are passages in Calvin's writings, which we shall cite, showing that infants of unbelievers are saved, and which led Dr. Shedd

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to say that Calvin distinguishes between infants saved by covenanted mercy, and infants saved by uncovenanted mercy. We, however, hold to the opinion that the new covenant extends the grace of Christ to the infants of all nations. The following passages confirm this as Calvin's teaching :

"By the doctrine of the gospel, those who are formerly aliens are ingrafted into the church. In regard to the young, as God comprehends them under the covenant, they are no longer reputed aliens, but are heirs of grace, as we learn from Peter's discourse."—*Tracts*, Vol. III., page 350.

"When the office of teaching was committed to the disciples, they were not prohibited from baptizing infants. Moreover, I should like to know why, when the evangelist uses the term "*ἀνθρώπους*" (which comprehends the whole human race without exception), he denies that infants are included."—*Institutes*, Book III., page 31.

"Christ does not there speak (John iii. 36) of the general guilt in which all the posterity of Adam are involved, but only threatens the despisers of the gospel, who proudly and contumaciously spurn the grace which is offered to them. But this has nothing to do with infants. Every one whom Christ blesses is exempted from the curse of Adam and the wrath of God. Therefore, seeing it is certain that infants are blessed by him, it follows that they are freed from death."—*Tracts*, Vol. III., page 351.

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This view is still further confirmed when we attend to the manner in which Calvin shows how the offer of life is extended under the gospel to those who were considered aliens to the covenant.

“My censor asks whether baptism is to be denied to a Jew or Turk if they request it. Here everybody sees under what gross hallucination he labors in assuming that those are aliens to whom he assigns faith. What he chooses to dream I cannot tell. It is absurd to use this argument against me, who uniformly teach that by faith all who were most alien are united into the family and body of Christ.”—*Tracts*, Vol. III., page 351.

“As to the children of papists. . . . My censor falsely imagines that I regard them as strangers, because they were neither begotten of a holy father, nor born of a holy mother. They cease not to be the children of saints, though it be necessary to go farther back for their origin. God does not stop at the first degree, but diffuses the promise of life to a thousand generations.”—*Tracts*, Vol. III., page 351.

This view of the covenant of grace is often confounded with the special promises God has made to believers conditioned on their faithfulness to their covenant vows. That Calvin did not claim benefit for infants from this aspect of the covenant we shall show in a single passage:

“Accordingly, as Augustine says, ‘both the condemned unbeliever and the acquitted believer beget off-

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spring, not acquitted, but condemned, because the nature which begets is corrupt.' Moreover, though godly parents do in some measure contribute to the holiness of their offspring, this is by the blessing of God—a blessing, however, which does not prevent the primary and universal curse of the whole race from previously taking effect. Guilt is from nature, whereas sanctification is from supernatural grace.”—*Institutes*, Book II., Chap. I., 7.

That this aspect of the covenant is insufficient for grounding our faith in the salvation of the children of believers, we cite first the scripture teaching regarding Esau, and the children of Eli; secondly, we will show Calvin taught that failure on the part of parents violated the covenant.

“I would not be understood as insinuating that baptism may be contemned with impunity; so far from excusing this contempt, I hold that it violates the covenant of the Lord.”—*Institutes*, Book IV., Chap. XVI., 20.

Commenting on Romans ix. 7:

“For he seems to insinuate that carnal relationship to Abraham, which we think of some consequence, is nothing. But we must attend carefully to the subject the apostle is there treating. His object being to show to the Jews that the goodness of God was not restricted to the seed of Abraham—nay, that of itself it contributes nothing—produces, in proof of the fact, the cases of Ishmael and Esau. These being rejected, just as if they

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had been strangers, although, according to the flesh, they were the genuine offspring of Abraham, the blessing resides in Isaac and Jacob. This proves what he afterwards affirms, viz., that salvation depends on the mercy which God bestows on whomsoever he pleases, but that the Jews have no ground to glory or plume themselves on the name of the covenant, unless they keep the law of the covenant—that is, obey the word.”—*Institutes*, Book II., Chap. XVI., 14.

We shall now show that Calvin considered infants to have privileges in Christ independent of the church and the sacraments. Commenting on Ephesians v. 26 :

“ If by baptism Christ intends to attest the ablution by which he cleanses his church, it would seem not equitable to deny this attestation to infants, who are justly deemed part of the church, seeing that they are called heirs of the kingdom of heaven.”—*Institutes*, Book IV., Chap. XVI., 22.

The French version of the *Institutes* makes plain that infants stand in need of Christ’s righteousness in a way not provided under special promises to believers.

“ Children descend, not from the spiritual generation which the servants of God have of the Holy Spirit, but the carnal generation which they have of Adam.”¹

¹ “ Les enfans ne descendent point de la generation Spirituelle qui les serviteurs de Dieu ont du S. Esprit, mais de la generation charnelle qu’ils ont d’Adam.”

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If, therefore, we are to entertain faith in the salvation of the infants of believers, we shall first have to consent that the new covenant, in distinction from the old, is destined to embrace all infants within its merciful provisions.

ORIGINAL SIN AND PELAGIANISM.

The doctrine of original sin as taught by Calvin has so involved infants that it is necessary that we understand exactly what he defines original sin to be, if we are to conclude that he teaches that infants may be freed from its consequences. He says :

“Original sin, then, may be defined a hereditary corruption and depravity of our nature, extending to all parts of the soul, which first makes us obnoxious to the wrath of God, and then produces in us works which in scriptures are termed works of the flesh.”—*Institutes*, Book II., Chap. I., 8.

In this definition there are two descriptive clauses : First, a corruption that extends to all parts of the soul, and makes us obnoxious to God ; second, works which are produced in us, and are called works of the flesh. That the latter could not refer to infants, all are agreed. That the former does, is set out in Calvin’s own words, as follows :

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“Hence even infants, bringing their condemnation with them from their mother’s womb, suffer, not for another’s, but for their own defect; for, although they have not yet produced the fruits of their own unrighteousness, they have the seed implanted in them, nay, their whole nature is, as it were, a seed-bed of sin in the sight of God; for there could be no condemnation without guilt.”—*Institutes*, Book II., Chap. I., 8.

We suppose this language is as strong and as clear as any one could wish for a description of the guilt of infants in the sight of God, and, standing alone, apparently settles the question; but looked at in its proper setting, the consequence to infants is entirely relieved.

The language occurs in an attempt to refute the teachings of the Pelagians. In describing the timidity of the oldest doctors of the church in glancing obscurely at the point, Calvin says:

“This timidity, however, could not prevent the rise of Pelagius, with his profane fiction—that Adam sinned only to his own hurt, but did no hurt to his posterity.

. . . But when it was clearly proved from scripture that the sin of the first man passed to all his posterity, recourse was had to the cavil, that it passed by imitation, and not by propagation.”—*Instit.*, Bk. II., Chap. I., 5.

The two positions now stand out in the clear. According to Pelagius, infants had suffered nothing from the fall; according to Calvin, they had been involved in ruin. The one is

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scriptural, and the other is not, and for this reason the Pelagian teaching had to be refuted. Calvin first proceeds, therefore, to show how infants are involved, and then he undertakes to show how God has provided, in Christ, for their relief. He says :

“To what quibble will the Pelagians here recur? That the sin of Adam was propagated by imitation! Is the righteousness of Christ, then, available to us only in so far as it is an example held forth for our imitation? Can any man tolerate such blasphemy? But if, out of all controversy, the righteousness of Christ, and therefore life, is ours by communication, it follows that both of those were lost in Adam, that they might be recovered in Christ, whereas sin and death were brought in by Adam, that they might be abolished in Christ. There is no obscurity in the words, ‘As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.’ Accordingly the relation subsisting between the two is this: as Adam, by his ruin, involved and ruined us, so Christ, by his grace, restored us to salvation.”—*Institutes*, Book II., Chap. I., 6.

We have, now, that broad distinction between Pelagianism and Calvinism on the subject of infant damnation and infant salvation; and Calvin, no more than Pelagius, holds to infant damnation. He is as anxious as Pelagius that they should not suffer for Adam’s transgression, and so he proceeds to show that

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the consequences of Adam's sin, so far as it bears on man, is done away in Christ whenever Christ, by his grace, renews the nature; and we think the context abundantly shows that Calvin regarded the gospel of Christ as absolutely removing all consequences of the fall in infants dying in infancy. The fact of their ruin is the ground for his hope of their salvation, while with the Pelagians, if the ruin was acknowledged, there was no means of their being saved. It is not Pelagianism to say "that Christ takes the curse of Adam and the wrath of God away from infants, and consequently they shall not see death," because this implies that the merit of Christ gives newness of nature to infants. That Calvin believed this we shall prove in one passage:

"And what can be clearer than the expression, 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God?' (1 Cor. xv. 50.) Therefore, let everything that is our own be abolished (this cannot be without regeneration), and then we shall perceive the possession of the kingdom. In fine, if Christ speaks truly when he declares that he is life, we must necessarily be ingrafted in him by whom we are delivered from the bondage of death. But how, they ask, are infants regenerated, when not possessing a knowledge of either good or evil? We answer that the work of God, though beyond the reach of our capacity, is not therefore null."—*Instit.*, Book IV., Chap. XVI., 17.

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It is Pelagian, however, to affirm that infants are saved because they are innocent, and do not stand in need of the merit of Christ or of regeneration. When we urge that God regards infants as freed from death because of Christ, we are saying exactly what John Calvin says, after having been very particular to say, out of Christ they are abominable to God, because of innate corruption.

The condemnation to death for the sin of Adam is something the world has stumbled at, and will continue to stumble at, until it perceives, as Calvin did, that there is a moral necessity in God, after having decreed to save men, that he save them by divine sacrifice, and when we lift our thought to God the Righteous, the existence of this moral necessity in his nature, calling for the condemnation of sin, becomes an axiom, a self-evident proposition transcending demonstration. The failure in perceiving this led Zwingli to the view he took of original sin, and made his view senseless. Calvin insisted on this necessity, and showed that God had met it in the divine sacrifice. God must be ignorant of sin, indifferent to sin, consent to sin, or else condemn sin. He could be in only one of the four attitudes to

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sin, therefore God has condemned sin, and, by the divine sacrifice, if he so wills, can forgive original and actual sin. He has revealed that to infants dying in infancy he does forgive original sin, because, as they legally sinned in Adam, and his act became theirs, so they legally paid the penalty in Christ, and his righteousness becomes theirs; and so it may be stated as a solemn truth, that no one is ever taken to heaven who did not first deserve to be sent to hell.

Luther said, in his marginal notes on John xv. 22:

“Through Christ original sin is annulled, and damneth no man since Christ’s coming, unless he will not forsake it, that is, will not believe.”¹

Calvin was not hedged in by baptismal regeneration as was Luther, and being a much keener man in seeing essentials, the same words with Calvin—and he uses them—would mean: there is nothing, since Christ has annulled original sin, against man but actual sin, and if any continued in actual sin, it proves he is

¹“Denn durch Christum ist die Erbsünde auffgehoben, und verdamnet nach Christus Zukunfft niemand. On wer sie nicht lassen, das ist, wer nicht gleuben wil.”

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worthy of condemnation independent of other considerations. By which we mean that original sin is of such kind that it condemns all men, and if Jesus Christ had not come to our help with his life and death, we must have died eternally therein. In other words, our legal oneness with Adam made his disobedience our disobedience as truly and justly as though the act had been our own personal act; just as our legal or covenant oneness with Christ makes his satisfaction of the law our satisfaction as real and actual as though personal by us.

In Melanchthon's German edition of the Confession (1533), the only edition in the German in which any variations were made by him, and which has never been changed in any respect in meaning from the original Confession, the part of the article on original sin reads:

"Original sin condemns all those under God's wrath who are not born again through baptism, and faith in Christ through the gospel and Holy Spirit."—*Weber's Edit. Weimer, 1781, Corpus Reformator. XXVI., 725.*

Here, likewise, we have the description of the effects of original sin, with the results of Christ's legal satisfaction, hampered by the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Free the passage from this, and we have Calvin's teach-

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ing, that all under original sin are dead, except those who are rescued by the "only Redeemer," and as infants are rescued by him, it follows that they shall not see death.

"Our birth is but a sleep, and a forgetting;

The soul that rises with us, our life's star,

Hath had elsewhere its setting,

And cometh from afar;

Not in entire forgetfulness,

And not in utter nakedness,

But, trailing clouds of glory, do we come

From heaven, which is our home."

—*Wordsworth.*

Beautiful as is the poetry and the expression, and the thought, too, is not without speciousness, nevertheless it will not bear the test of logic, nor of the witness of scripture. We inevitably come back to Calvin, and find corruption shut up in the nature, even from the womb.

THE PARADOX.

We proposed to show that Calvin did not believe predestination consigned infants dying in infancy to damnation; this we shall do from his own words. It must be clear that if predestination and election are concerned with men before they are born, then there must be infants

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predestined to damnation, or non-elect infants, since all must pass through the infant stage before becoming adults. If it be asked whether, from Calvin's writings on predestination and election, it can be determined whether infants dying in infancy are saved, the answer is, It cannot.

When arguing the fitness of infants for the sacrament of baptism, we shall find Calvin's words very significant, if we remember he is opposing himself to those who did not believe in infant salvation, for the reason that they did not believe in their fitness for baptism. Here we have the strange picture of a man who is charged with believing in infant damnation arguing infant salvation, in overthrowing objections to infant baptism.

Speaking of circumcision and baptism, Calvin says :

"The thing signified in both is one and the same thing, namely, 'regeneration.' The question, then, is, Can infants, incapable of exercising faith through the hearing of the word, be regenerated?"

"If it be inquired whether baptism may be rightly administered to infants, shall we not pronounce it an excess of folly, and even madness, in any one who resolves to dwell entirely on the element of water, and the external observance, and cannot bear to direct his thoughts to the spiritual mystery? But if they are

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partakers of the thing signified, why shall they be excluded from the sign? If they obtain the truth, why shall they be debarred from the figure? Though the external sign in the sacrament is so connected with the word as not to be separated from it, yet if it be distinguished, which shall we esteem of greater importance? Certainly, when we see that the sign is subservient to the word, we shall pronounce it to be inferior to it, and assign it the subordinate place. While the word *baptism*, then, is directed to infants, why shall the sign, which is an appendix to the word, be prohibited them?"

This is Calvin's argument to show that infants of believers should be baptized, for he says, "It must be evident that the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham continues as much in force with Christians in the present day as it did formerly with the Jews."

"For the sign of God, communicated to a child, like the impress of a seal, ratifies and confirms the promise given to the pious parent, declaring that the Lord will be a God, not only to him, but also to his seed, and that he is determined to exercise his goodness and grace, not only towards him, but towards his posterity, even to a thousand generations. Nor shall I regard an objection, if it should be urged, that the mere promise of God ought to be sufficient to assure us of the salvation of our children; since God, who knows our weakness, and has been pleased in this instance to indulge it, has decided otherwise. Let those, therefore, who embrace the promise of God, that he will perpetuate his mercy to their offspring, consider it their duty to present them to the church to be signed with the symbol of mercy."

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CHAPTER II.

REGENERATION THE ESSENTIAL.

Bearing in mind that Calvin is arguing the regeneration of infants, it is clear he has no doubt about the salvation of at least some of the infants of believers. The covenant made with the Jews passes over to the Gentile nations, and at least the children of believers are included. Now let us see if Calvin included others :

“ Wherefore the Lord Jesus, to exhibit a specimen from which the world might understand that he was come to *extend* rather than to *limit* the mercy of the Father, kindly received the infants that were presented to him, and embraced them in his arms, chiding the disciples, who endeavored to forbid their approach to him, because they would keep those, of whom was the kingdom of heaven, at a distance from him, who is the only way of entrance into it. But some one will object, what resemblance does the embrace of Christ bear to baptism? for he is not said to have baptized them, but to have received them, taken them into his arms and blessed them; therefore, if we desire to imitate his example, let us assist infants with our prayers, but let us not baptize them. But it is necessary to consider the conduct of Christ with more attention than it receives

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from persons of this class. For it is not to be passed over as a thing of *little importance* that Christ commanded infants to be brought to him, and added as a reason for this command, 'For of such is the kingdom of heaven'; and afterwards gave a practical testimony of his will, when, embracing them in his arms, he commended them to his Father by his prayers and benedictions. If it be reasonable for infants to be brought to Christ, why is it not allowable to admit them to baptism, the symbol of our communion and fellowship with Christ? If of them is the kingdom of heaven, why should they be denied the sign, which opens, as it were, an entrance into the church; that being received into it, they may be enrolled among the heirs of the heavenly kingdom? How unjust shall we be, if we drive away from Christ those whom he invites to him; if we deprive them of the gifts with which he adorns them; if we exclude those whom he freely admits? But if we examine how far what Christ did on that occasion differs from baptism, how much greater importance shall we attach to baptism, by which we testify that infants are included in the covenant of God, than to the reception, the embrace, the imposition of hands, and the prayers by which Jesus Christ himself acknowledged them as his, and declared them to be sanctified by him!

"The other cavils by which our opponents endeavor to elude the force of this passage only betray their ignorance; for they argue that as Christ said, 'Suffer little children to come,' they must have been grown to such an age and stature as to be capable of walking. But they are called by the evangelist *βρεφει* and *παιδια*—two words used by the Greeks to signify little infants hanging on the breast. The word 'come,' therefore, is merely used to denote *access*. To such evasions are persons obliged to have recourse who resist the truth.

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Nor is there any more solidity in the objection that the kingdom of heaven is not said to belong to infants, but to those who resemble them, because the expression is not ‘*of them*,’ but ‘*of such* is the kingdom of heaven.’ For if this be admitted, what kind of reason would it be that Christ assigns, with a view to show that infants in age ought to be prevented from approaching him, when he says, ‘Suffer little children to come unto me’? Nothing can be plainer than that he intends those who are in a *state* of real infancy. And to prevent this from being thought unreasonable, he adds, ‘of such is the kingdom of heaven,’ and if infants be necessarily comprehended, it is beyond all doubt that the word ‘such’ designates both infants themselves and those who resemble them.”—*Institutes*, Book IV., Chap. XVI.

From the foregoing it is certain that Calvin had no doubt about the salvation of those who were known to the Spirit to be like little children. It is absurd to infer that he could believe that one who was in the infant *state*, being taken away, could possibly find a place anywhere but in the kingdom of God. When we establish likeness in things, they belong to the same class. He argues that this is a class declared by Christ to be fit for the kingdom of heaven, “for of such is the kingdom;” then they certainly should be fit for the sacrament of baptism, which is only an outward sign of what they inwardly are.

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This distinction is as clear as could be made, marking the classes which are saved. Calvin uses one mark, or characteristic, to distinguish them. The fewer the number of marks, the greater the number of objects included under them. The *state* of actual infancy includes *all* infants dying in infancy; it is therefore impossible, from this statement, for one dying in this *state* to be lost. He here declares positively that infants dying in infancy are saved.

This class can be known by the ordinary sense of man. The other class certainly saved is that which is like infants; there is no doubt of their salvation, but who compose this class we cannot affirm as in the case of the infants. "By their fruits ye shall know them." But men are so limited, and so liable to deception, that we cannot individualize, and say this one is saved, or that one is; but we maintain, from Calvin's own words, he does say that infants who go out of this world in a *state* of actual infancy are saved. He proceeds in the next place to show how they are saved.

In arguing with those who denied that infants were fit subjects for baptism, and yet did not affirm that they were consequently lost, he shows how infants are regenerated:

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“They consider themselves as advancing a most powerful argument for excluding infants from baptism when they allege that, by reason of their age, they are not yet capable of understanding the mystery signified in it; that is, *spiritual regeneration*, which cannot take place in *early* infancy. Therefore, they conclude, they are to be considered in no other view than as children of *Adam*, until they have attained an age which admits of a second birth. But all these things are uniformly contradicted by the truth of God; for if they must be left among the children of *Adam*, they are left in death, for in *Adam* we can only die. On the contrary, Christ commands them to be brought to him. Why? Because he is *life*. To give them *life*, therefore, he makes them partakers of himself; while these men, by driving them away from him, adjudge them to death. For if they pretend that infants do not perish, even though they are considered as children of *Adam*, their error is abundantly refuted by the testimony of scripture; for when it pronounces that ‘in *Adam* all die,’ it follows that there remains no hope of *life* but in Christ. In order to become heirs of life, therefore, it is necessary for us to be partakers of him. So when it is said in other places that we are by nature the children of *wrath*, and conceived in sin, with which condemnation is always connected, it follows that we must depart from our own nature to have any admission to the kingdom of God. And what can be more explicit than this declaration, that ‘flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God?’ Let everything of our own, therefore, be destroyed which will not be effected without *regeneration*, and then we shall see this *possession* of the kingdom.

“Lastly, if Christ speaks the truth when he declares himself to be ‘life,’ it is necessary for us to be ingrafted into him, that we may be rescued from the bondage of

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death. But how, it is inquired, are infants regenerated, who have no knowledge of good or evil?

"We reply that the work of God is not yet without existence because it is not *observed or understood* by us. Now it is certain that some infants are saved, and that they are previously regenerated by the Lord is beyond doubt; for if they are born in a state of corruption, it is necessary for them to be purified before they are admitted into the kingdom of God, into which 'there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth.' If they are born sinners, as both David and Paul affirm, either they must remain unacceptable and hateful to God, or it is necessary for them to be justified. And what do we require more, when the Judge himself declares that there is no entrance into the heavenly life except for those who are born again; and, to silence all objectors, by sanctifying John the Baptist in his mother's womb, he exhibits an example of what he is able to do for others. Nor can they gain any advantage by their frivolous evasion, that this was only a single case, which does not justify the conclusion that the Lord generally acts in this manner with infants; for we use no such arguments. We only mean to show that they unjustly confine the power of God within those narrow limits to which it does not suffer itself to be restricted.

"Their other subterfuge is equally weak. They allege that, according to the usage of the scriptures, the phrase *from the womb* denotes *from childhood*. But it is easy to see that in the declaration of the angel to Zacharias, it was used in a different sense, and that John was to be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he was born. Let us not attempt, therefore, to impose laws upon God, whose power has sustained no diminution, but is able to sanctify whom he pleases, as he sanctified this child."—*Institutes*, Book IV., Chap. XVI.

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It is apparent in this argument that Calvin is conforming infant salvation to regeneration, and, if we may be allowed the expression, finds in the case of infants an *exception* to the ordinary method by which the Holy Spirit regenerates the adult. The adult hears the Word, and exercises faith; the infant neither hears the Word nor exercises faith. Regeneration is the same in both cases; the manner is different. In the one case, we can understand and explain the method; in the other case, we cannot explain how it is done. Here, then, is one obstacle to infant salvation removed. They are regenerated.

The clause "some infants are saved" has been taken to mean that some infants are lost, while nothing could be farther from Calvin's mind. Consider what he is establishing. He is showing that every person who is saved must be regenerated; if not in the ordinary way, then in the exceptional way; and he takes the case of infants, whom the scriptures declare are saved, to show that infants must, and can be, regenerated.

The conclusion must be, not that some infants are not saved, but that infants dying in the *state* of infancy are regenerated and saved.

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The fair inference is if God regenerated John the Baptist in his mother's womb, who lived to adult age, we have an example of the power of God to regenerate all dying in infancy; and if regeneration, the barrier to the kingdom of God, be removed, no objection should be raised to giving the sign of baptism to that class which is certainly fit for the kingdom of heaven.

We propose to show next that Calvin was so thoroughly convinced of the regeneration of infants dying in infancy that he accepted the statement "of such is the kingdom of heaven" as satisfactory, independent of any external sign, and argued the case of an adult to prove his claim.

"It is further evident that their notion ought to be exploded, because it adjudges all unbaptized persons to eternal death. Let us suppose their tenet to be admitted, and baptism to be administered to adults alone; what will they say becomes of a youth who is rightly instructed in the first principles of piety, if he desires to be baptized, but, contrary to the expectation of all around, happens to be snatched away by sudden death? The Lord's promise is clear, 'Whosoever believeth on the Son shall not come into condemnation,' but 'is passed from death unto life.' We are nowhere informed of his having condemned one who had not yet been baptized.

"Moreover, they sentence all infants to eternal death

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by denying them baptism, which, according to their own confession, is necessary to salvation. Let them see now how well they agree with the language of Christ, which adjudges the kingdom of heaven to little children. But though we should grant them everything they contend for relative to the sense of this passage, still they will gain no advantage from it, unless they first overturn the doctrine which we have already established respecting the *regeneration* of infants.”—*Institutes*, Book IV., Chap. XVI.

We find nothing in Calvin’s writing that will in any way imply that he thought that any infants in the infant *state* who pass out of the world are not regenerated. It is clear that no regenerated person, infant or adult, can be lost; so independent of all but regeneration, Calvin declares, that the adult having this must be saved; and having shown that infants in the infant *state* can be regenerated, unless the *regeneration* of infants is set aside, then infants dying in infancy must be saved.

“ But our opponents say, ‘ Faith cometh by hearing,’ of which they (infants) have not yet acquired the use, and they cannot be capable of knowing God; for Moses declares them to ‘ have no knowledge between good and evil.’ But they do not consider that when the apostle makes hearing the source of faith, he only describes the ordinary economy and dispensation of the Lord, which he generally observed in the calling of his people, but does not prescribe a perpetual rule for him, precluding his employment of any other method, which he has

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certainly employed in the calling of *many* to whom he has given the knowledge of himself in an internal manner, by the illumination of his Spirit, without the intervention of any preaching. But as they think it would be such a great absurdity for any knowledge of God to be given to infants, to whom Moses denies the knowledge of good and evil, I would beg them to inform me what danger can result from our affirming that they already receive some portion of that grace, of which they will ere long enjoy the full abundance. For if the plenitude of life consists in the perfect knowledge of God, when *some of them*, whom death removes from the present state in their earliest infancy, pass into eternal life, they are certainly admitted to the immediate contemplation of the presence of God. As the Lord will, therefore, illuminate them with the full splendor of his countenance in heaven, why may he not also, if such be his pleasure, irradiate them with some faint rays of it in the present life; especially if he does not deliver them from all ignorance before he liberates them from the prison of the body? Not that I would hastily affirm them to be endued with the same faith which we experience in ourselves, or at all to possess a similar knowledge of faith, which I would prefer leaving in suspense.” —*Institutes*, Book IV., Chap. XVI.

The clause in this argument, “When *some of them*, whom death removes from the present state in their earliest infancy, pass into eternal life,” has been taken to mean that others, whom death likewise removes, pass into eternal death. Nothing could be farther from the point. The contrast is not between infants saved and

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danned, but between infants dead, who are enlightened by God, and infants alive who may be enlightened by him. The “*some*” is inclusive of all dead infants. If they pass into the immediate contemplation of the presence of God, why may they not have some faint rays of the knowledge of God in the present life? This construction is apparent to all who do not wish to cavil merely; for this interpretation is evident, either from the most natural translation of the original, or from the context.¹

If we translate *quum eorum nonnulli*, “when some of them,” and make *quos* correlative with *nonnulli*, we at once relieve the passage of all difficulty, for then *eorum* refers to all infants as a class of beings which may be saved without the exercise of faith, and *nonnulli quos* refers to some of them who certainly have been saved without hearing the word and exercising faith. This brings us in line with the subject Calvin has under discussion in this passage, for the section begins, “But *faith*, they say,

¹ “Nam si vitæ plenitudo perfecta Dei cognitione constat: quum eorum nonnulli, quos prima statim infantia hinc mors abripit, in vitam æternam transeant, ad contemplandam certe Dei faciem præsentissimam recipiuntur.”—*Institutes*, Lib. IV., Cap. XVI., 19.

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cometh by hearing, the use of which infants have not yet obtained, nor can they be fit to know God, being, as Moses declares, without the knowledge of good and evil." The argument is designed to set aside this foolish contention on the part of his opponents. Calvin first establishes that when the apostle makes hearing the beginning of faith, he is only describing the usual economy which the Lord is wont to employ, but does not lay down an invariable rule for which no other method can be substituted. In proof of this, he says, "Many he certainly has called, and endued with the true knowledge of himself, by internal means, by the illumination of the Spirit, without the intervention of preaching." That infants are not referred to is apparent from the terms used. One does not speak of God's calling infants, nor would we use the expression "without the intervention of preaching" unless we were referring to those who might be reached by preaching, but have been reached by some other method.

And so Calvin, in the second place, proves that knowledge of God is not conditioned solely on hearing, by citing infants, for he says, "Let them tell me where the danger lies if they are

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said now to receive some part of that grace of which they are to have the full measure shortly after." That infants as a class are spoken of, it would be mere quibbling to question. Calvin next shows that the knowledge of God is possible for infants by showing that some of them, whom death removes in the first moments of infancy, pass into the immediate presence of God. If it is certain, then, that those taken away in the first moments of infancy, "whom the Lord is to illumine with the full brightness of his light, why may he not, if he so pleases, irradiate them at present with some small beam, especially if he does not remove their ignorance before he delivers them from the prison of the flesh?" Now we have the proposition established that *faith* may be had without *hearing*, because those who die in the first moments of infancy pass into the immediate presence of God. If they will be illumined fully in his presence, why may he not give them some faint ray before they are taken? It could not be clearer that Calvin conditions his inference about infants on the belief that all (*eorum*) infants may be enlightened by God, and that those (*quos*) whom death removes in infancy certainly are.

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CALVIN ON REPROBATION.

“ But what necessity is there for citing the testimony of Bernard, since we hear from the Master’s own mouth that ‘no man hath seen the Father save he which is of God,’ which implies that all who *are not regenerated* by God, are stupefied with the splendor of his countenance? Faith, indeed, is properly connected with election, provided it occupies the second place. This order is clearly expressed in these words of Christ, ‘This is the Father’s will, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which believeth on the Son, may have everlasting life.’ If he willed the salvation of all, he would give them all into the custody of his Son, and unite them all to his body by the sacred bond of faith. Now it is evident that faith is the peculiar pledge of his paternal love, reserved for his adopted children. Therefore, Christ says in another place, ‘The sheep follow the shepherd, for they know his voice; and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers.’ Whence this difference, but because their ears are divinely penetrated? For no man makes himself a sheep, but is created such by heavenly grace.

“ Now, with respect to the reprobate, whom the apostle introduces in the same place; as Jacob, without any merit yet acquired by good works, is made an object of grace, so Esau, while yet unpolluted by any crime, is accounted an object of hatred. If we turn our attention to works, we insult the apostle, as though he saw not that which is clear to us. Now, that he saw none is evident, because he expressly asserts the one to have been elected and the other rejected, while they had not done any good or evil, in order to prove the foundation of divine predestination not to be in works.

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“Secondly, when he raises the objection whether God is unjust, he never argues, what would have been the most absolute and obvious defence of his justice, that God rewarded Esau according to his wickedness, but contents himself with a different solution—that the reprobates are raised up for this purpose, that the glory of God may be displayed by their means.

“Lastly, he subjoins a concluding observation, that ‘God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.’ You see how he attributes faith to the mere will of God. If, therefore, we can assign no reason why he grants mercy to his people but because such is his pleasure, neither shall we find any other cause but his will for the reprobation of others; for when God is said to harden or show mercy to whom he pleases, men are taught by this declaration to seek no cause beside his will.”—*Institutes*, Book III., Chap. XXIII.

In this passage all unregenerated persons are non-elect, and all regenerated persons are elect. The barrier to infant salvation is *regeneration*. Christ declares that the *state* of infancy is such that those in it can be regenerated; this barrier then goes. The passage also states that some infants are elect, and some non-elect, and a specific instance is given in Jacob and Esau. Now, what we maintain is that this passage on reprobation, and its bearing on infants, and Calvin's own words on infant regeneration and salvation, cannot be reconciled unless we con-

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cede that he believed all infants dying in infancy are elect infants, and are regenerated and saved. Nay, we do not say it must be conceded, but we affirm that it cannot be denied from his writing without making him ridiculous in his reasoning, which we think none will undertake to do; wherefore, we conclude—

From this statement of reprobation, and what we have found regarding the regeneration of infants, it is evident that all infants dying in infancy are considered by Calvin to be elect infants. The words “of *such* is the kingdom of heaven” meant to Calvin that Christ made a statement which relieved the mind of suspense regarding the salvation of children, when he taught that provision for all the limitations of infancy is provided in himself. It is clear that Calvin intended, not to specify any particular infants, but wished to relieve *infancy* of those barriers that theology had, apparently, put in the way of salvation.

To illustrate: It may have been true that one, or some, of the very infants that Christ took in his arms were non-elect infants; if so, it would not in the least affect the truth Christ was inculcating, viz., that provision being in himself for infancy as a *state*, we are relieved

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regarding the salvation of all in that *state* so long as they are in it, for we cannot say what infant will survive the state of infancy, and what one will not; surely, then, should one die in this *state*, it must be saved, because the Lord expressly declares that he has provided for this *state*. Now suppose that one of the identical infants Christ took in his arms survived the state of infancy, and was a non-elect infant, and was finally a lost adult, it could not possibly affect the truth Christ taught, that against infancy as a state there was no barrier to salvation.

The two classes that Calvin says are saved are infants in the state of infancy, and those like infants. Beyond this he could not go, for the Word of God goes no farther.

Calvin puts infants in the condemnation of death in consequence of the fall of Adam. In Christ the consequence of the fall is destroyed, unless, by actual sin, one may incur the consequences. There is left, then, only the corrupt nature, consequent to the fall, in infants. Having shown, in his argument, that infants can be regenerate, and regeneration renewed the nature, there stands against this class of infants who are regenerated absolutely nothing from

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Adam's fall, or the wrath of God; consequently, they shall not see death.

Let us ask, what infants compose this class? Those regenerated in the womb, as was John the Baptist, certainly do, and those whom Christ blesses. What infants did he bless? Is it to be inferred that he blessed all infants, or that taking infants in his arms, he blessed this *state*? If the latter, then those dying in the *state* of infancy are the "of such is the kingdom of heaven." Or did he bless infants in the sense that against the class, because of his work, the curse of Adam and the wrath of God did not stand? If in this sense, those dying in this *state* are necessarily saved. It is certain that Christ could not have blessed *all* infants in the sense of exempting them from death, since some infants, passing beyond the state of infancy, do incur the penalty of death. If this blessing of Christ means regeneration, as Calvin maintains—for only regenerated persons can be exempt from death—and if all infants were blessed by Christ, then he involves himself in the absurdity of saying, some whom Christ exempted from death in infancy are in adult age put back under the penalty of death by actual sin; for he says:

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“All those whom Christ blesses are exempted from the curse of Adam and the wrath of God; and as it is known that infants were blessed by him, it follows that they are exempted from death.”

The case of Esau alone shows that all infants are not exempt. What are we left to but to conclude that Christ blessed the *state* of infancy, and assured us that those dying in this *state* are regenerated by the Spirit, and saved. With this there is no conflict with anything Calvin elsewhere says, when he states that the predestinating and electing to life or death is based solely on the will of God. It only shows that here the will of God has been revealed to us regarding the election, at least, of this class.

This leaves it clear that there may be infants predestinated to eternal death; it only asserts that they do not die in infancy.

ELECT AND REPROBATE.

Whenever the doctrine of election is spoken of in connection with infants, Calvin never states it so as to imply that there are any non-elect infants dying in infancy. A few passages will suffice to show this.

“This, at least, we set down as incontrovertible, that none of the elect is called away from the present life

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without being previously sanctified and regenerated by the Spirit of God; as to their objection, that in scripture the Spirit acknowledges no sanctification save that from incorruptible seed—that is, the Word of God—they erroneously interpret Peter's words, in which he comprehends only believers who had been taught by the preaching of the gospel. (1 Peter i. 23.) We confess, indeed, that the word of the Lord is the only seed of spiritual regeneration, but we deny the inference that therefore the power of God cannot regenerate infants. This is as possible and easy for him as it is wondrous and incomprehensible to us. It were dangerous to deny that the Lord is able to furnish them with the knowledge of himself in any way he pleases."—*Institutes*, Book IV., Chap. XVI., 18.

"If those on whom the Lord has bestowed this election, after receiving the sign of regeneration, depart this life before they become adults, he, by the incomprehensible energy of his Spirit, renews them in the way which he alone sees to be expedient."—*Institutes*, Book IV., Chap. XVI., 21.

Whenever Calvin describes the reprobate, he does it in such manner as to make it impossible to apply reprobation to infants. Reprobation is the term by which Calvin designates those who are finally lost (*re* and *probo*, "to prove"), a term implying a testing of those capable of being tried, and hence responsible for their failure. A few passages will make this clear.

"Moreover, though their perdition depends on the predestination of God, the cause and matter is in them-

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selves. . . . Wherefore, let us, in the corruption of human nature, contemplate the evident cause of damnation (a cause which comes more closely home to us) rather than inquire into a cause, hidden and almost incomprehensible, in the predestination of God.”—*Institutes*, Book III., Chap. XXIII., 8.

“The reprobate would excuse their sins by alleging that they are unable to escape the necessity of sinning, especially because a necessity of this nature is laid upon them by the ordination of God. We deny that they can thus be validly excused.”—*Institutes*, Book III., Chap. XXIII., 9.

“As all who are of the number of the reprobate are vessels formed unto dishonor, so they cease not, by their perpetual crimes, to provoke the anger of God against them, and give evident signs of the judgment which God has already passed upon them, so far is it from being true that they vainly contend against it.”—*Institutes*, Book III., Chap. XVI., 12.

This last quotation is couched in such language as to make the reprobate conform to the terms by which he is described. It likewise states that this is a description of all who are reprobated. The description precludes infants, wherefore we conclude that Calvin could not have believed in infant reprobation.

In the correspondence between Calvin and Servetus occurs one sentence from Calvin that is worthy of remembrance by those who insist that Calvin taught the reprobation of infants.

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In his defense of the baptism of children, Calvin says, "Should God take them out of the world before they could be spiritually circumcised, we must leave them to the secret dispensation of divine grace."

If ever a man had the occasion to say he believed in the reprobation of infants Calvin had it here. Servetus was ridiculing his system because it allowed of the baptism of children on the same conditions and at the age that circumcision was allowed; now, when Servetus pushes the inquiry about the final state of children beyond the age at which they could be spiritually circumcised, that this attempt at the *reductio ad absurdum* should have been answered as in the above, puts it beyond controversy, that Calvin did not teach the doctrine of infant reprobation, and positively refused to declare his belief in the reprobation of any in the infant state.

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CHAPTER III.

CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF INFANT REGENERATION AS OPPOSED TO THE DOCTRINE OF INFANT DAMNATION.

We have claimed that prior to Calvin and Zwingli theologians did not permit the doctrine of regeneration to be applicable to those who could not hear the Word and exercise faith; and that when it was conceded that infants could be regenerated, and the scriptures gave instances of their having been regenerated in their mother's womb, we would naturally expect from so important a concession a decided change in the theological views of all who so believed and taught.

Dr. George L. Prentiss, a professor in Union Theological Seminary, New York, says :

"The change from the position generally held by Calvinistic divines at the beginning, or in the middle, of the seventeenth century, to the ground taken by Dr. Charles Hodge in 1871, in his *Systematic Theology*, is simply immense. It amounts to a sort of revolution in theological opinion; a revolution all the more note-

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worthy from the quiet, decisive way in which it was at last accomplished, the general acquiescence in it, and also the apparent unconsciousness of its logical consequences?"

THE IMMENSE TRANSITION.

We are of the opinion that the change from the positive statement of Augustine, Tertullian, and others, that infants were subject to a mild hell (if we may so express it) because they could not be regenerated, to a positive assertion of their regeneration and salvation without the hearing of the Word or the exercise of faith, is a change indeed immense, and of such importance that we should not be surprised to find the men who brought it about as large in their beliefs regarding the salvation of children as Dr. Charles Hodge. Calvin says:

"That in baptism remission of sins, as well as the grace of the Holy Spirit, is offered and exhibited to us, all the pious confess. They also acknowledge that infants have need of it, not as a necessary help to salvation, but as a seal divinely appointed to seal upon them the gift of adoption; for Paul teaches that the children of believers are born holy (1 Cor. vii. 14). And, indeed, baptism would not be at all suitable to them if their salvation were not already included in this promise, 'I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee'; for they do not become the sons of God through baptism, but because, in virtue of the promise, they are heirs of

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adoption; therefore, the church admits them to baptism. And, as of old, when the children of the Israelites died before the eighth day, they suffered not by wanting the sacrament of circumcision, so now, provided there is no contumacy or negligence on the part of the parents, the simple promise by which the children of believers are from the womb adopted into the fellowship of the church suffices for their salvation; for injury is done to Christ if we imagine that the grace of God is impaired by his advent. But God once gave the name of *sons* to all who should be born of Israel (Ezek. xviii. 4); nor do we read that John was baptized, though he was the minister of baptism to others. We ought, therefore, to hold that, as in Abraham, the father of the faithful, the righteousness of faith preceded circumcision, so in the children of the faithful, in the present day, the gift of adoption is prior to baptism. According to the words of the promise, 'I will be a God to thy seed' (Gen. xvii. 7). Baptism, however, is a confirmation of this gift, and a help to our faith."—*Tracts*, Vol. I.

"Suffer children. He declares that he wishes to receive *children*; and at length, *taking them in his arms*, he not only embraces, but *blesses* them by the *laying on of hands*; from which we infer that his grace is extended even to those who are of that age; and no wonder, for since the whole race of Adam is shut up under the sentence of death, all, from the least even to the greatest, must perish, except those who are rescued by the only Redeemer. To exclude from the grace of redemption those who are of that age would be too cruel; and, therefore, it is not without reason that we employ this passage as a shield against the Anabaptists. They refuse baptism to *infants*, because infants are incapable of understanding that mystery which is denoted

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by it. We, on the other hand, maintain that, since baptism is the pledge and figure of the forgiveness of sins, and likewise of adoption by God, it ought not to be denied to *infants*, whom God adopts and washes with the blood of his Son. Their objection, that repentance and newness of life are also denoted by it, is easily answered. *Infants* are renewed by the Spirit of God, according to the capacity of their age, till that power which was concealed within them grows by degrees, and becomes fully manifest at the proper time. Again, when they argue that there is no other way in which they are reconciled to God, and become heirs of adoption, than by faith, we admit this as to adults, but, with respect to *infants*, this passage demonstrates it to be false. Certainly, the *laying on of hands* was not a trifling or empty sign, and the prayers of Christ were not idly wasted in air; but he could not present the infants solemnly to God without giving them purity; and for what did he pray for them, but that they might be received into the number of the children of God? Hence it follows that they were renewed by the Spirit to the hope of salvation. In short, by embracing them, he testified that they were reckoned by Christ among his flock. And if they were partakers of the spiritual gifts, which are represented by baptism, it is unreasonable that they should be deprived of the outward sign. But it is presumption and sacrilege to drive far from the fold of Christ those whom he cherishes in his bosom, and to shut the door, and exclude as strangers those whom he does not wish to be *forbidden to come to him*.

“‘*For of such is the kingdom of heaven.*’ Under this term he includes both little children and those who resemble them; for the Anabaptists foolishly exclude children, with whom the subject must have commenced; but at the same time, taking occasion from the present

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occurrence, he intended to exhort his disciples to lay aside malice and pride, and put on the nature of *children*. Accordingly, it is added by Mark and Luke, that no man *can enter into the kingdom of heaven* unless he be made to resemble a child."—*Harmony of the Gospel*, Vol. II., pages 390, 391.

From these passages we shall first ascertain what proposition the great reformer is laying down. It is, that the whole race of Adam is shut up under the sentence of death. "All, from the least even to the greatest, must perish, except those who are rescued by the only Redeemer." The exposition of this passage of scripture is an endeavor to escape from the consequences of this terrible truth as to infants. In doing so, Calvin lays down as a corollary to his proposition, that to cause new-born infants to perish eternally is too cruel a conception to entertain concerning God; therefore, he reasons, they are not excluded from the benefits of redemption: for he states, and this statement is worthy of note, "To exclude from the grace of redemption those who are of that age would be too cruel." This sentence determines the interpretation of the exposition Calvin gives of this scripture.

As a secondary consideration, he turns the

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force of this exposition upon the anabaptists, regarding infant salvation. Their belief was that all perish, since none were capable of the exercise of faith. We have set forth our belief regarding Calvin's interpretation of the *state* of infancy, showing that Christ blessed this *state*, and taught the world that as long as infants remained in it there should be no apprehension for their safety: and should they die in it, there should be no fear for their eternal salvation. In confirmation of this view, we ask the reader to consider this sentence, "But it is presumption and sacrilege to drive far from the fold of Christ those whom he cherishes in his bosom, and to shut the door, and to exclude as strangers, those whom he does not wish to be *forbidden to come to him.*"

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CHAPTER IV.

CALVIN MISUNDERSTOOD AND MALIGNED.

Dr. Henry J. Van Dyke indicated, in the following, that he entertained no doubt as to Calvin's position on this great subject:

"He [Calvin] assumes as a premise, which it is 'impossible to deny,' that God, by his decree of predestination, and for no other reason than because it seemed meet to him to do so, has involved the infant offspring of many nations in eternal death without remedy. This is what he calls the camel. He tells his opponents that they have swallowed it; and he tells them the truth, for since the days of Augustine all Christians, except a few heretics, believed in infant damnation. Calvin on this point was only teaching up to the times. And he goes on to reason *a fortiori*, that having swallowed this camel, they ought not to strain at the gnat, viz., 'The scripture doctrine that all were, in the person of one, made liable to eternal death.' As against the opponents with whom he thus reasons, Calvin's argument was *ad hominem* and unanswerable. But the times have changed, and the whole attitude of the argument is changed also. In our day even [Westminster] Calvinists do not swallow the camel. The doctrine that election runs the line of separation between the innumerable multitude upon whom natural death passes before they sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression, predestinating some of them to salvation, and others to eternal death, without remedy, has passed

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away, with other superstitions, from the faith of the Protestant world. So far as the Presbyterian Church is concerned, no man has contributed more to indicate and to produce this change than Dr. Charles Hodge. The salvation of all dying infants, with all the consequences it involves, is a characteristic feature of Princeton theology. Not exclusively so, of course. The same truth is accepted and taught in all our theological seminaries. But where is the recognized Calvinistic authority prior to Hodge's theology, in which it is taught explicitly and without qualification, that 'All who die in infancy are saved' ? (*Theology*, Vol. I., 26.) Lay this parallel with Calvin's *horribile decretum*, and follow out the scripture argument by which it is sustained, till it culminates and is crowned with the declaration, 'It is more congenial to the nature of God to save than to destroy,' and how wide is the difference, how marked the contrast, in the spirit of their reasoning, and in the conclusions they reach, between the Calvinism of Geneva and the Calvinism of Princeton."—*The Variations of Calvinism*, pages 40, 41.

We are somewhat surprised to find any such interpretation of the language of the great reformer as Dr. Van Dyke has given.¹ That

¹ Having seen what Dr. Henry J. Van Dyke has said, in the above, we may as well have the passage, from which he drew his conclusions, before us in the original :

"Disertis verbis hoc exstare negant, decretum fuisse a Deo, ut sua defectione periret Adam. Quasi vero idem ille Deus, quem Scriptura prædicat facere quæcunque vult, ambiguo fine condiderit nobilissimam ex suis creaturis. Liberi arbitri fuisse dicunt, ut fortunam ipse sibi

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infant damnation was believed in to the time of Calvin, with the exception of Zwingli, we concede, and, so far as we have been able to learn, others concede as much.

The camel swallowed is nothing more than that Adam's sin involved the whole human race in ruin.

fingeret: Deum vero nihil destinasse, nisi ut pro merito eum tractaret. Tam frigidum commentum si recipitur, ubi erit illa Dei omnipotentia, qua secundum arcanum consilium, quod aliunde non pendet, omnia moderatur? Atqui prædestinatio, velint nolint, in posteris se profert. Neque enim factum est naturaliter, ut a salute exciderent omnes unius parentis culpa. Quid eos prohibet fateri de uno homine, quod inviti de toto humano genere concedunt? Quid enim tergiversando luderent operam? Cunctos mortales in unius hominis persona morti æternæ mancipatos fuisse Scriptura clamat. Hoc quum naturæ adscribi nequeat, ab admirabili Dei consilio profectum esse minime obscurum est. Bonos istos iustitiæ Dei patronos perplexos hæere in festuca altas vero trabes superare nimis absurdum est. Interum quæro Unde factum est, ut tot gentes una cum liberis eorum infantibus æternæ morti involveret lapsus Adæ absque remedio, nisi quia Deo ita visum est? Hic obmutescere oportet tam dicaces alioqui linguas. Decretum quidem horribile fateor: inficiari tamen nemo poterit quin præsciverit Deus, quem exitum esset habiturus homo, antequam ipsum conderet, et ideo præsciverit, quia decreto suo sic ordinarat. In præscientiam Dei si quis hic invehatur, temere et inconsulte impingit."—*Institutes*, Lib. III., Cap. XXIII., 7.

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The English word "horrible" conveys an idea so utterly at variance with what Calvin had in mind when he used the Latin word *horribile* to describe God's decree, that it may not be out of place here for attention to be called to it, since the translation of the word into such English causes many to prejudge the passage, and, to some extent, really affects the meaning.

Calvin's doctrine of election, which he describes as a profound mystery, and which must not be curiously examined, but nevertheless is a profitable doctrine, calculated to destroy the very roots of pride and presumption, is the initial cause of the intense hatred of his name. In his system of theology, under this doctrine, occurs the startling statement that God, for the glory of his righteousness, consigns some to damnation; and the expression brought against him, "A terror-moving decree." "This celebrated place, *Decretum quidem horribile fatcor*, which does honor to his feelings, has also served as the foundation of abuse." (Ancillon: *Melange's Critiques*, page 37.) "People accuse Calvin," says that writer, "of describing God's decrees as horrible, whereas he simply meant that we ought to tremble at contemplating this mystery; as he himself expresses it in the

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French version of the *Institutes*, Rivett, III., in his treatise *Apologeticus*, says the same thing."

Dr. Henry J. Van Dyke undertook to make much out of the passage, in showing that Calvin taught infant damnation, and has succeeded in showing a carelessness of reading rather than accuracy of interpretation. He translated *absque* as though equivalent to *sine*, indicating a defect in reality, while *absque* is equivalent to *nisi*, indicating a defect in conception.

We will not, however, content ourselves with this construction from the Latin alone, for we are willing to admit that it is a fiction to suppose that Calvin wrote Latin as pure as Cicero; but when he interprets his own words in the same Latin in which he wrote the above quotation, we think Calvin should be accepted on the meaning of his own language, rather than Dr. Van Dyke, and he says:

"But while I admit that all the posterity of Adam, born of the flesh, bear their damnation with them from the womb, I hold that this is no obstacle to the immediate application of the divine remedy."¹

¹"Ego autem, etsi fateor omnes posteros Adæ ex carne genitos ab ipso utero gestare suam damnationem id tamen ob stare nego quominus statim remedium Deus afferat."—*Institutes*, Lib. IV., Cap. XVI., 31.

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This settles that *absque* is correctly translated in the manner we have indicated, and it does not depend upon whether Calvin wrote correct Latin or not. This suffices to suggest Dr. Van Dyke's fallibility in regard to Calvin's teachings, had we nothing worse against him. We wish to show, however, that, in confounding the camel with the gnat, he was guilty of an unpardonable blunder.

Calvin had said:

"They deny that it is ever said, in distinct terms, God decreed that Adam should perish by his revolt, as if the same God who is declared in scripture to do whatsoever he pleases could have made the noblest of his creatures without any special purpose. They say that, in accordance with free will, he was to be the architect of his own fortune, that God had decreed nothing but to treat him according to his desert. If this frigid fiction is received, where will be the omnipotence of God, by which, according to his secret counsel, on which everything depends, he rules over all? But whether they will allow it or not, predestination is manifest in Adam's posterity. It was not owing to nature that they all lost salvation by the fault of one parent. Why should they refuse to admit with regard to one man that which, against their will, they admit with regard to the whole human race? Why should they, in cavilling, lose their labor? Scripture proclaims that all were, in the person of one, made liable to eternal death, and this cannot be ascribed to nature; it is plain that it is owing to the wonderful counsel of God. It is very absurd in these

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worthy defenders of the justice of God to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.”—*Institutes*, Book III., Chap. XXIII., 7 (Ed. Edition).

The camel, according to Calvin, is the scripture doctrine “that all were, in the person of one, made liable to eternal death,” and the gnat is, that this should have been by the wonderful counsel of God, and not according to nature.

In order to show the absurdity of such a consequence being due to nature, or that Adam’s posterity are involved in ruin by imitation, Calvin adds, “I again ask how it is that the fall of Adam involves so many nations, together with their infant children, in eternal death without remedy, unless that it so seemed meet to God?” This was involved in what his opponents had admitted in the premises, and he shows that Adam’s acting “in accordance with free-will” does not relieve them of the difficulty, for when they admitted that the infant offspring of many nations were involved in eternal death, from any cause whatsoever, they swallowed the camel in his contention “that all in the person of one were involved in eternal death.” Hence when Calvin says, “Nor ought it to seem absurd when I say that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and

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in him the ruin of his posterity, but also at his own pleasure arranged it," the argument clearly is, that having swallowed the camel of the ruin of the race, by Adam "acting in the capacity of a free-agent," they ought not to strain at the gnat of his referring it to the predestination of God; for Calvin says, "Thus if there be any just or plausible complaint, it must be directed against predestination." But this gnat is what his opponents gagged at, for they asked, "Why God is offended with his creatures, who have not provoked him by any previous offence; for to devote to destruction whomsoever he pleases, more resembles the caprice of a tyrant than the legal sentence of a judge; and, therefore, there is reason to expostulate with God, if at his mere pleasure men are, without any desert of their own, predestined to eternal death." (*Institutes*, Book III., Chap. xxiii., 2.)

When Dr. Van Dyke, therefore, says, "He [Calvin] assumes as a premise, which is impossible to deny, that God, by his decree of predestination, and for no other reason than because it seemed meet to him to do so, has involved the infant offspring of many nations in eternal death without remedy, this is what

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he calls the camel," Dr. Van Dyke manifestly confounds the gnat with the camel.

If we have made it clear that Dr. Van Dyke is guilty of this error, it may help us to understand that this much-abused passage has nothing to do with infant damnation, further than to state that the fall of Adam has involved the race, without exception, in eternal death. Had Dr. Van Dyke not been so anxious to prove infant damnation as a tenet of Calvin, he would not have been lead into this error. Having made the mistake, he was driven into another conclusion equally false, viz., that "so many nations, with their infant children," implies other nations, with their infant children, for whom a remedy has been provided. This absurdity is made apparent from the context, for it immediately follows that "it is impossible to deny that God foreknew what the end of man was to be before he made him"; which shows that the term "man" is synonymous with "so many nations," and that the expressions "man," "so many nations," and "human race," are used interchangeably in this passage, and that they all refer to those who were involved in the ruin of Adam's sin. But, if it could be proven that we are not correct in our

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contention, it would not help Dr. Van Dyke, since we have shown that Calvin admitted of a remedy being applied. The most that can be said is that, "so many nations, with their infant children," are involved in eternal death in the same sense that all are involved, and if God provides a remedy for any, it cannot be proved, from this passage alone, that the remedy will not be applied to all. It must, therefore, be apparent that Calvin intended nothing more by this passage than to teach that all were, in the person of one, involved in eternal death, and that according to the predestination of God.

Having shown that "infant children of many nations" does not admit of Dr. Van Dyke's explanation, it may be well to inquire how it gets used in the connection it is. Calvin was reducing the arguments of his opponents to the *reductio ad absurdum*. When they claimed that Adam's posterity came into their ruin by imitation of his sin, and not by imputation, nothing could be more pertinent than to ask, how it came about that Adam's sin had involved infant children in eternal death. Dr. Van Dyke's error is even more glaring when he states the same matter in a different form, as follows:

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“Now let us be candid with ourselves, and even with our opponents.’ Historic Calvinism *does* include what Calvin himself calls the *horribile decretum*, that, by the election and predestination of God, many nations, *with their infant children*, are irretrievably doomed to eternal death. The language above quoted cannot be interpreted as referring only to the guilt of Adam’s first sin, by which judgment came upon all men to condemnation, because: (1) That is true of *all*, and not merely of *many* nations. (2) That guilt and condemnations is not *without remedy*; the remedy for it is the very essence and glory of the gospel of Christ. The Lamb of God ‘taketh away *the sin* of the world.’ (3) The judgment that has come upon all men to condemnation, so that ‘all were, in the person of one, made *liable* to eternal death,’ is not what Calvin singles out from the results of the covenant work, and tags as a *horrible decree*. His reasoning is the other way. He assumes as a premise, which it is ‘impossible to deny,’ that God, by his decree of predestination, and for no other reason than because it *seemed meet* to him to do so, has involved the *infant offspring* of many nations in eternal death *without remedy*.”—*The Variations of Calvinism*, pages 39, 40.

Dr. Van Dyke argued that such changes have taken place in theological thought that Calvinists no longer swallow the camel, from which we beg leave to dissent, and had Dr. Van Dyke known what the camel was he likewise would have dissented.

It is certainly impressive that the one who has done more for the world than any un-

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inspired man who ever lived should be so maligned, and that his system of thought should be so misrepresented. One is possessed with the feeling that action so violent must one day cause a reaction equally as violent. There were certain things done by Calvin, when Geneva was the Protestant city of refuge for Europe, and such results have been attained by his teachings that the honesty and good sense of the world will save them from calumny and falsehood, and put them where the people shall some day recognize their benefactor, and the source from whence come their liberties.

We have already indicated that the change from belief in the damnation of infants, because it was believed they could not be regenerated, to the belief of the scripture doctrine of the regeneration of infants without the hearing of the Word or the exercise of faith is a more remarkable transition than the supposed change from the Westminster teaching to the Princeton theology. In the latter, the change is in the enlightenment of the people, concerning the teaching of Calvin and the Westminster fathers, during the last two hundred and fifty years. There is nothing remarkable in this.

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Frequently a writer's opinion on a particular question may be the better ascertained by studying him on other questions than the one we may be investigating, a kind of indirect testimony. This is true concerning Dr. Charles Hodge on infant salvation. It does not appear that Dr. Hodge considered his views on this subject at all remarkable, nor does it appear, as Dr. Van Dyke indicated, that he saw any difference between his views and those held by all evangelical churches long before pen was put to paper to write his great work on theology.

More than this, Dr. Hodge held to the theory of immediate imputation while Calvin was a traducianist. We know this distinction had not been made in Calvin's time, but if we classify his works, they belong to this school. This distinction is very important in considering Dr. Van Dyke's rhetorical expressions in distinguishing the theology of Geneva from that of Princeton. We must confess that to us it appears much kinder for the Supreme Being to tell us that our guilt is due to transmission from our first parent than to tell us that every soul, newly created in this world, is created with a nature liable to become sinful. To the

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common mind, it looks as though our great Father had it in his power to give each one a new chance, or that it was optional whether he would create them holy and confirm them in holiness. If Dr. Van Dyke had wished to advance a more liberal theological teaching than the great man at Geneva gave the world, it would have been better if he had advanced some other view than the one Dr. Charles Hodge has given the world. It may be our blindness or ignorance, but we certainly fail to see the advance of Dr. Hodge's teachings on those of John Calvin regarding this vital subject.

If Dr. Van Dyke had viewed original sin from this point, it would have been awful still, but not so awful as from the point of immediate imputation, and Calvin would not have appeared so inhuman to him. If Calvin's point of view is shocking to some, we must confess, if God has decreed to deal with infants after the theory of immediate imputation, this is a view point likewise shocking to others. Lest we appear extravagant, we bring to bear the words of Dr. Robert L. Dabney, one of the mightiest minds the Presbyterian Church has had, North or South :

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“Turretin states the view of immediate imputation, which has since been defined and asserted in its most rigid sharpness by the Princeton School. It boldly repudiates every sense in which we really or actually sinned in Adam, and admits no other than merely the representative sense of a positive covenant. It says that the guilt of Adam’s first sin, which was personally nobody’s but Adam’s own, is part of the penalty of death, due to Adam’s sin, and is visited on Adam’s children purely as the penal consequence of the putative guilt they bear; for sin may be the punishment of sin. Very true, after depravity of nature thus becomes personally theirs, it is also an addition of personal guilt, for which they are thenceforward punished, as well as for actual transgressions.”

. . . “This distinction between ‘mediate’ and ‘immediate’ imputation should never have been made. . . . It causelessly aggravates the difficulties of the awful doctrine of original sin, exaggerating needlessly the angles of a subject, which is, at best, sufficiently mysterious; that the arguments by which the immediate imputation must be sustained misrepresent the doctrines of the spiritual union and justification; and especially, that it is false to the facts of the case, in a mode the counterpart of Placæus’. It represents ‘the child of Adam as having a separate, undepraved, personal existence, at least for an instant; until from innocent, it becomes depraved by God’s act, as a penal consequence of Adam’s guilt imputed as *peccatum alienum* solely.”—*Dabney’s Theology*, pages 341, 342.

The view of John Calvin on original sin, however, while kinder than Dr. Hodge’s, was

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more scriptural and reasonable than Dr. Dabney's.

Those who may desire to know more of the feelings of John Calvin on this great question may find the deepest emotions of his heart revealed in his letter to Viret on the death of his only son.

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CHAPTER V.

SOME OF CALVIN'S EARLIER MALIGNERS.

Albert Pighius was born at Campen, in Ober-Yassel; he studied at Lauvain and Cologne. Pope Hadrian VI., Clemens VII., and Paul III. had a high opinion of him. He was a violent opponent of the reformers. Pighius was an orthodox Roman Catholic priest. He was made provost of the Church of St. John at Utrecht under Pope Paul III., and hoped to get a cardinal's hat for his attack on Calvin.

Calvin complained that Pighius had raged against the fundamental truths of the Reformed Church in ten books. "If I had not answered him," he says, "the honor of Christ would have been trodden under foot, and I should have been a traitor to the Saviour."

Calvin's work appeared under the title, *J. Calvini Defensio Sacra et Orthodoxa Doctrinae de Servitute et Liberatione Humani Arbitrii adversus Calumnias Alb. Pighii.*

This work clearly set out the place and importance of the will and works, and the conse-

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quences of original sin, which bear so importantly on the passage, in the work of Pighius, which we shall undertake to interpret, that it is necessary to quote somewhat at length from it.

“He objects to us, in the first place, that we can do neither good nor evil, and everything happens by necessity through the power of God; there can be no reason why we should not cease from acting at all. I answer with Solomon, ‘A man’s heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.’

“Moreover, we have not said that the wicked sin with such a necessity that they do not act with wilful and considerate wickedness. Necessity consists in this, that God completes his designs thereby: this is fixed and unalterable. But, at the same time, because the intention and the will to do evil are in them, the wicked are guilty of the sin committed. Some one may here say that God urges and leads them to this. Yes, we answer, but so that herein God acts on the one side, and they on the other. They pursue their own wicked desire, while God so employs their wickedness that he attains his righteous end. The holy scripture says, ‘Assur is the rod of his anger’; and how could the axe be proud which is lifted by the hand of God?

“The world is governed by law, but according to the order which God has proposed to himself for the upholding of the world. We are no stoics, forming to ourselves the notion of a fate from the eternal connection of things. All we say is, that God has not merely events in his power, but also the hearts of men; and that he so conducts all things that nothing finally can happen, let men do what they will, which he has not

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before ordained. Further, what seems chance, we call necessity; not through a natural necessity, but because God rules all things by his eternal counsels."

"The tenor of this fifth objection is, that we make God the author of all evil; that is, the most cruel of beings out of the most righteous, and folly itself out of infinite wisdom. Now I do not deny that the natural man might publish such a foolishness to the world. What an absurdity, however, would it not be to judge the incomprehensible decrees of God—those which Paul adored with fear and trembling, because he could not understand them—according to weak human reason! We would, therefore, avoid this carnal, dangerous rashness, and exercise a chaste forbearance and reverence in respect to the divine righteousness. We shall then see that God is not the author of evil, though it be said that he urges the wicked to commit it as he will, and that he executes and perfects his work by their means; but we shall rather confess that he is a most wonderful and glorious Creator, who accomplishes good, even through evil instruments, and employs unrighteousness for purposes of good."—*J. Calvini Defensio*, etc.

In arguing against the claim of merit in good works is the following in defence of Luther:

"He has not spoken of them to deprive them of all worth in the sight of God, nor has he ever denied that God will reward them. He has only desired to show what they are if viewed according to their actual value, and not according to the mercy of God. But you will say, that in Luther's mode of expressing himself, the whole subject sounds hyperbolical; although I am ready

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to allow this, yet I contend that he had good reasons for using this strong kind of language. He saw the world so deep sunk in mortal slumber, through its false and dangerous confidence in the holiness of works, that he despaired of awakening it by words—by his voice; the sound of the trumpet only could arouse it.”—*J. Calvini Defensio*, etc.

Calvin comes at last to the conclusion, that as there is something sinful even in every good work, they must all be viewed in the light of sins, if judged strictly according to their worth, and not according to the grace of God.

It will be observed that Pighius did what we have charged Dr. Van Dyke with doing, viz., he has referred the ruin, into which the race has fallen, to the arrangement whereby whatever takes place in the world comes to pass, and is to be referred to the secret counsel of God, with the fall itself and its consequences.

The arrangements of all things by the pre-determinate counsel of the Almighty, and the acts of man under that arrangement, have been shown to be so entirely separate and distinct, and the one not in any sense to be caused by the other, in the passage we have cited, that it is not necessary to do more than to request the

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reader to bear this in mind in reading what Pighius has written.

Relieving Calvin's writing of all in the way of necessity, on the part of man, to sin, because his fall took place under a divine arrangement, and showing the place of good works in the scheme of grace to be one where merit cannot be attached to them, the explanation of this passage, to use Calvin's own words about his opponents, "becomes easy."

It possibly may not be generally known, by those who cite this passage with such confidence, that Albert Pighius himself, after reading Calvin's writings, became a Calvinist. (*Senebier*, Art. "Calvin," page 238; *Basnage*, t. II., page 610.)

"If Pighius holds that original sin is not sufficient to damn men, and that the secret counsel of God is not to be admitted, what will he (Pighius) do with children and infants who, before they have reached an age at which they can give any such specimens (of good or evil works) are snatched from this life? When the conditions of birth and death was alike to infants who died in Sodom and in Jerusalem, and there was no difference in their works, why will Christ, at the last day, with some standing at his right hand, separate others at his left? Who will not adore the wonderful judgment of God, whereby it comes to pass that some are born at Jerusalem, whence soon they pass to a better life, while

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Sodom, the entrance to the lower region, receives others at their birth? Moreover, I by no means deny that Christ awards the meed of righteousness to the elect, so the reprobate will then suffer for their impiety and their crimes.”—*De æterna Dei Predestinatione*. Tom. VIII.

This passage is conclusive to those who assert Calvin taught infant damnation. What is the distinct thing Calvin undertakes to do in this passage? It is to show the consequences of Pighius affirming “that original sin is not sufficient to damn men.” How does he do it? By asking two questions. The first question is, What will he (Pighius) do with infant children, who, before they have reached an age at which they can give any such specimens (of good or evil works), are snatched from this life? Since it “is to be held for certain that all who are destitute of the grace of God are included under the sentence of eternal death; whence it follows that the children of the reprobate, whom the curse of God follows, are subjected to the same sentence.” (*Calvin on Isaiah xiv.* 21.)

The second question is, Why will Christ, at the last day, separate some to stand at his right hand, others at his left?

Could anything be plainer than that Calvin

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is arguing *ad hominem*? He is discussing with one who already believed in the damnation of infants to eternal death. Why should he be asked any such question, unless it be to show the absurdity of their being damned under the doctrine of works?

The injustice of damning the infants of Sodom, without works, is made apparent by saving the infants of Jerusalem without works. Calvin's position was that infants are regenerated, and saved in an exceptional way. The man who so believed could well ask the question, "Why will Christ separate some on his right hand, and others on his left," knowing no answer could be given.

What is the answer that the question should have received if Pighius was right? That Christ would do so because some infants were judged by good works, and others by bad works.

What reply would be made to such an answer? "For inasmuch as the conditions of birth and death were alike to infants who died at Sodom and those who died in Jerusalem, and there was *no difference* in their works!" Then Christ cannot separate some on his right hand from others on his left for this cause.

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How, then, could infants be involved in eternal death? In consequence of original sin, "for they bear corruption shut up in the soul, so that before God they are damnable."

Why, then, are infants who die in the infant state not damned? Because Christ removes from them the curse of Adam, and being renewed in nature, by the Spirit, working when and where it to him seemeth good, there is nothing against this class.

From this conclusion there is no escape.

This manner of stating the case would force Pighius to the bald position of declaring that "infants, torn from their mother's breast," had been eternally damned for their evil works. The absurdity of the Romish doctrine of infant damnation could not have been thrust with a keener blade.

If we consider that Calvin, on the great doctrines of predestination, election, and foreordination, concedes that, had God seen fit to have damned every infant since Adam was created, his justice would not be involved, since all were worthy of damnation on account of original sin, and would have been damned, had not God provided the "only Redeemer," we can under-

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stand why it would be patent injustice for God to damn infants who died in the destruction of Sodom, and save infants who died in the overthrow of Jerusalem, "when the condition of birth and death was alike to infants who died in Sodom and in Jerusalem, and there was no difference in their works."

In the first supposition, the justice or injustice of consigning all dying in infancy to hell could not be determined by man. He would have nothing to compare it with, and would be left to the conclusion that the Judge of all the earth must do right. In the second supposition, Pighius demands that damnation must be conditioned on bad works, and salvation on good works. Calvin retorts by asking the question, "What will he do with infant children, who, before they have reached an age at which they can give such specimens [of good or evil works], are snatched from this life?" Here it is apparent that Calvin means if there is not an atom in the scale to show a difference between the infants in Jerusalem and those in Sodom, it would be a manifest injustice for God to damn the one and save the other. Here we can make comparison, and can determine justice from injustice.

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Calvin's conclusion is, that infants are not under condemnation on account of works, but on account of original sin; and since Christ removes all consequences of original sin from infants, therefore all infants dying in infancy must be saved, not according to divine justice alone, but also according to the abundant mercy of God made manifest in Jesus Christ. From this conclusion there is absolutely no getting away.

We think our interpretation of this much-abused passage is further confirmed by Calvin's great pains displayed in showing the relation of works to reprobation. He says, "Moreover, I by no means deny that, as Christ awards the meed of righteousness to the elect, so the *reprobate* will then suffer for their impiety and their crimes." Take the two marks, *impiety* and *crimes*, and tell us if any sane man will affirm that these marks, in any scientific, religious, theological, or common-sense manner, describe infants?

To confirm this interpretation of the passage still further, we will turn to Calvin's exposition of the scriptures where the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah is related. He says:

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“And as it is often asked from this passage, ‘What had infants done to deserve to be swallowed up in the same destruction with their parents?’ The solution of the question is easy; namely, that the human race is in the hands of God, so that he may devote whom he will to destruction, and may follow whom he will with his mercy. Again, whatever we are not able to comprehend by the limited measure of our understanding, ought to be submitted to his secret judgment. Lastly, the whole of that seed was accursed and execrable, so God could not justly have spared even the least.”

In the same volume, in speaking of Lot's wife, he says, “Although it is not lawful to affirm anything respecting her eternal salvation, it is nevertheless probable that God, having inflicted *temporal* punishment, spared her soul.” We cannot suppose that, if Lot's wife was saved, any infants were lost in the overthrow. Such a conclusion is unthinkable. After stating that the destruction of these cities was intended by God to be an example for the benefit of all the ages of the liability of wickedness to *temporal* punishment, he says, “If the severity of the punishment terrifies us, let us remember that they sin, at this day, not less grievously, who, being delivered, not from Sodom, but from hell, fix their eyes on some other object than the proposed prize of their high calling.”

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We are enlightened in this passage as to the nature of the death that befell the infants in Sodom and Jerusalem. It was temporal death, as a punishment, due to the fault of another, for he says, "As to the infants they seem to perish not by their own fault, but by the fault of another. But there is a double solution. Though sin does not yet appear in them, yet it is latent; for they bear corruption shut up in the soul, so that before God they are damnable."

Here we have the whole matter, and what are we to conclude? Is it not apparent that when we apply Calvin's argument on the regeneration of infants we establish the folly of Pighius and others regarding the doctrine of *works*, and at the same time relieve Calvin's teaching of every vestige of infant damnation to eternal death?

CASTALIO AND PREDESTINATION.

Castalio made an attack on Calvin in the following words:

"All laws condemn men after actual sin and on account of actual sin. But this God of Calvin has condemned and reprobated impious men before they exist, even before they are impious and have sinned; and since

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he has condemned them before their sin, he compels them to sin, forsooth that he may appear to condemn them justly."

To which Calvin made the following reply:

"As to your objection that no one can be justly condemned except on account of actual sin, and after actual sin, there is no dispute between you and me concerning the former, since everywhere I teach that no one will perish unless by the just judgment of God. I may not disguise, however, that there is a hidden venom under your words; for if the comparison which you propose be admitted, God will be unjust who involves the whole race of Abraham in the guilt of original sin. You deny that it is right for God to condemn any mortal except on account of actual sin. Countless mortals are taken from life while yet infants. Now put forth your virulence against God, who hurls innocent new-born babes, torn from their mother's breast, into eternal death. Whosoever will not detest this blasphemy, wherever it is publicly exposed, may revile me as much as he pleases; for I dare not ask to be exempt and free from the insults of those who do not spare God."—*De Occulta Dei Providentia*, Opera, Tom. VIII.

We interpret this passage as follows:

If one denies that God condemns any mortal except for actual sin, he involves himself in the dilemma of either charging God "with hurling innocent new-born babes, torn from their mother's breast, into eternal death, since countless mortals are taken from this life while yet infants."

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Or else, he must deny condemnation for original sin, since infants have no actual sin, and declare all infants born in a state of innocence. This latter was unthinkable to Calvin, and the former was to him the grossest blasphemy.

Calvin's argument plainly is: If one has no more reverence for God's revealed Word than to deny a fundamental doctrine, like original sin—it being one of the five points in his system—and so involve God in so dreadful a thing as condemning innocent infants to eternal death, "then he may revile me as much as he pleases; for I do not ask to be exempt and free from the insults of those who do not spare God."

It will be noted that Calvin transposes Castalio's language — "after actual sin and on account of actual sin." Calvin changes to read "on account of actual sin, and after actual sin." This is done to show that he believed that the just judgment of God would only consign to eternal death those who had sinned in act.

For argument we will suppose a process of reasoning for Calvin: While "I teach that no one will *perish* unless by the just judgment of God," when you assert that none can be con-

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demned until "after actual sin," you are not affirming what is in your first proposition, but you are aiming at vilification of the doctrine, that in Adam all were made liable to eternal death. The condemnation you speak of in your first clause is what I mean by the damnation of those who sin in act. The condemnation I speak of under original sin is the liability of all to death before actual sin, and should I admit your comparison, I would be denying the doctrine of original sin; which is the first point in my system of doctrine. I may not disguise, therefore, that I see the hidden venom under your words. You think that conceding, as I everywhere do, that it is alone for actual sin that any are damned, therefore, having stated elsewhere that infants, hanging on the breast, are guilty of original sin, "this God of Calvin's has condemned and reprobated impious men before they existed, even before they are impious and have sinned; and since he has condemned them before their sin, he compels them to sin, forsooth that he may appear to condemn them justly."

"You deny that it is right for God to condemn any mortal except on account of actual sin. Countless mortals are taken from life

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while infants. Now, if my doctrine of original sin involves infants in eternal death, 'put forth your virulence against God, who hurls innocent, new-born babes, torn from their mothers' breasts, into eternal death.' It is a fact that I teach everywhere that original sin involves infants in condemnation, and it is a fact that countless infants are taken from life while yet infants. When the facts are construed by you to mean what you affirm, viz., 'that God hurls to eternal death the innocent who are incapable of any actual sin,' whosoever will not detest this blasphemy, whenever publicly exposed, may revile me as much as he pleases; for I dare not ask to be exempt and free from the insults of those who do not spare God."

If this interpretation is not true, then, as Dr. Charles W. Shields says, Calvin "premises that no one can be justly damned and perish except for actual sin; if he afterwards maintains that infants are damned and perish without sin, he would be nonsensically saying and unsaying the same thing in the same argument." Or, changing Dr. Shields' words a little: If it is not true, then Calvin has characterized reprobate infants as innocent, he has brutally described them as torn from their

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mothers' breasts, and impiously depicted the Almighty as an inhuman monster, plunging them into eternal death; he has affirmed the perdition of *all* infants as a class, he has denied what at first he affirmed, that both his premise and the premise of his opponent preclude the perdition of infants. This is a little too much to ask any man to believe Calvin would do.

In his *Institutes*, Calvin has already demonstrated the exemption of infants from the grace of salvation "as an idea not free from execrable blasphemy."

The meaning of the words "condemn" and "actual" as used by Castalio remain to be considered. We shall waive all other considerations except that of common sense, and ask, Does any one suppose "condemn" to him did not mean to eternal death, since it is used as synonymous with reprobated, or that "actual" did not mean sin in act? If Calvin agrees with him, is it possible for Calvin to believe that infants, whom he affirms again and again have no "actual" sin are condemned in the sense of eternally perishing? Is it possible for the language, "God, who hurls new-born babes, torn from their mothers' breasts into eternal death," to be the language of Calvin? Is it possible for

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this passage to mean anything except to deny that the doctrine of original sin involves God, so as to make him unjust to innocent babes? Is it possible for it to be less than blasphemy, when the holy and just God is charged with damning eternally those whom his Son declares are "exempt from the curse of Adam and the wrath of God?"

We wish to buttress this interpretation with the following:

"Servetus flatters himself that he has framed an irrefutable syllogism, 'Every one who does not believe in the Son of God remains in the death of Adam, and the wrath of God abideth on him; baptized infants do not believe in the Son of God, therefore they remain in the death of Adam. That they cannot believe is plain, because faith comes by hearing.' Before I may untie this Gordian knot, I can oppose it with a contrary syllogism, 'Whomsoever Christ blesses he exempts from the curse of Adam and the wrath of God; but infants, it is known, were blessed by him, therefore they are exempt from the wrath of God.' Moreover, the solution of the syllogism is easy, since Christ does not summon infants as accursed to the tribunal of God, but only denounces judgment on the contumacious, who reject the teachings of the gospel which they have heard."—*Refutatio Errorum Michaelis Serveti*, Opera, Tom. VIII.

He further states in the same work:

"Meanwhile, he adjudges them to death and hell. If one may here reason after the manner of Servetus,

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will not there be a plausible complaint against God, who pardons the impious and criminal, but, in a manner less than human, deprives wretched and innocent infants of all remedy? That he is even cruel, who, gratuitously condoning the crimes of his enemies, has not rescued from death his own most innocent images.”—*Refutatio Errorum*.

It must be clear, from the reading of this passage, that it is utterly absurd to argue that the man who, further back than 1564, wrote words like the above could believe in the eternal damnation of those—any of those—whom he carried like lambs in his bosom.

Being charged by Westphal with suspending infant baptism upon secret election, Calvin replies:

“I have written much, and the Lord has employed me in various kinds of discussion. If out of my lucubrations he can produce a syllable in which I teach that one ought to begin with predestination in seeking assurance of salvation, I am ready to remain dumb.”—*Second Defence of Sacraments* (Tracts).

NO INFANTS REPROBATED.

In determining Calvin’s meaning, when he speaks of the condemnation of infants, not to be that *all* infants are condemned to eternal death, and that *none* dying in infancy are repro-

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bated, we assert that the expression "reprobate infants" cannot be found in his writings. If it can be, then we are ready to remain dumb.

The Synod of Dort declared that the infants of believers were exempted from eternal death. Dr. B. B. Warfield says, "No synod probably ever met which labored under greater temptation to declare that some infants are reprobated than the Synod of Dort." It is more than probable that the private opinion of some of its members was that there are such infants, but the deliverances show that the synod declared there were no such infants.

In undertaking to establish the certain salvation of any given class, we must necessarily feel the force of *the single* exception. In the case of believers, Calvin mentions Esau. We are confronted with this condition. Calvin's works, the catechisms, and deliverances we have cited, assert positively that the believer can rest secure in the certainty of the salvation of his children; and yet the same authorities admit an exception. The paradox is, All children of believers are certainly saved: some children of believers are not saved. We will take the statement of one, who lived in the time of the controversy, to show the dilemma.

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Leydecker says:

“The faith demanded of parents in the formula of baptism is *indefinite*. This, to-wit, that godly persons’ infants are sanctified in Christ; and that faith is true, although there should be here and there an *exception*. . . . That divine promise has a *common* truth, though God *reserves to himself*, according to his own power and liberty, *the exclusion of some infants*. Faith. . . . performs its office when it lays hold of the promise *as it is given*, and reverently leaves to God *liberty of application*. The believer is bound . . . to acquiesce in the promise given, . . . and to trust in it, or, in the judgment of charity, to hope well concerning this infant which is to be baptized—nay, to believe that *this* infant belongs to Christ, *unless* God, by a singular decision, *will its exclusion*. The faith demanded of parents is not vain, . . . though *here and there one* (of the infants) *does not belong to the election*, . . . although there is not an internal baptizing of exactly all infants.”

From this we do not see how to escape the conclusion that this writer believed all infants excluded come to years of accountability, and are finally damned for actual sin; or, as Dr. Twisse would put it, “Wilfully committed, contumaciously continued in, by them that come to ripe years.” This is much more sensible than to conclude, as some have done, that Calvin would have explained the reprobation of Esau by charging the parents with violating the covenant when Jacob, a twin with Esau,

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was a non-reprobate. The authorities we have cited were designedly giving an answer to parents on the final state of infants dying in infancy. The answer is not uncertain in its sound. It is a word that all can understand. If there is a single exception, then it is no answer at all, for a parent, enough concerned to ask the question, would be too deeply concerned to rest satisfied with the possibility of his infant being the excepted one. He could rest satisfied with the assurance, that the baby presented for baptism, if death came upon it in infancy, was certainly saved; but possibly, should it come to years of accountability, the adult might not be of the elect.

OPINIONS OF OTHERS.

Dr. Lyman Beecher and Dr. Charles Hodge said they never knew a Calvinist who held the doctrine of infant reprobation. They could not find it in the works of Calvin, nor in the catechisms and standards of the church; nor can we.

It is by no means conclusive, to some of the very best minds we have had in the Presbyterian Church, that the Westminster Standards teach the possible damnation of infants. Many

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would be led to believe, from the extravagant statements in the literature of late years, concerning the personnel of the Westminster Assembly, that it was.

Dr. Shedd says :

“ As the tenet (‘ elect infants ’) was formulated by the Assembly, it has been understood to mean: (*a*) that all infants dying in infancy are elected as a class, some being saved by covenanted mercy, and some by uncovenanted mercy; (*b*) that all infants dying in infancy are elected as a class—all alike, those within the church, and those outside of it, being saved by divine mercy, nothing being said of the covenant; (*c*) that dying infants are elected as individuals, some being elect and some non-elect. Probably each of these opinions had its representatives in the Assembly, and hence the indefinite form of the statement. The writer regards the first-mentioned view as best supported by scripture and the analogy of faith; but there are many who advocated the second view, and perhaps there may be some who hold the third.”

It does not appear that this writer regarded it certain that any of the Westminster divines believed in infant reprobation. It is beyond doubt that the deliverances of this Assembly were never so construed by him.

Dr. Krauth says :

“ The whole body of Genevan pastors, fifteen in number, with Calvin heading the list, charged upon Servetus as one of his errors—the error which cost him his

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life—that he asserts that ‘he dare condemn none of the (infant) offspring of Ninevites or barbarians to hell (*futurum gehennam*), because, in his opinion, a merciful Lord, who hath freely taken away the sins of the godless, would never so severely condemn those by whom no godless act has been committed, and who are most innocent images of God’; and, further, he infers that ‘all who are taken from life as infants and children are exempt from eternal death, though they be elsewhere called accursed.’”—*Refutatio Errorum Michælis Serveti*, Opera. *Infant Baptism and Infant Salvation in the Calvinistic System*, page 52.

Dr. Paul Henry says:

“As soon as Calvin heard that the Assembly, in its zeal, had gone too far, he called the ministers together, and they, with one voice, besought the council to soften the mode of execution. Another color, in fact, had been given to the whole proceeding, by dooming the culprit to the flames. Calvin had already said to Farel, ‘I think he will be *condemned* to die; but I wish that what is horrible in the punishment may be spared him.’

“We find that it was his blasphemy, his rash jesting with holy things, the insult with which he had treated the majesty of God. . . . The judges passed over everything else, such as his supposed pantheism, his rejecting the prophecies of Isaiah, and his doubts respecting the spirituality of the soul.”—*Life and Times of Calvin*, Vol. II., page 216.

It was the teaching of Servetus that the infants of the Ninevites were spared on the

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ground of their innate innocence, and the denial of their guilt under original sin that Calvin controverted. He was as willing as Servetus to admit of their salvation under grace, for he distinctly says:

“God intended to show, though there was justest reason for destroying entirely the whole city (of Nineveh), there were yet other reasons which justified the suspension of so dreadful a vengeance; for many infants were there who had not, by their own transgressions, deserved such a destruction.”—*Comm. Jonah*, Lecture LXXX., page 144.

Calvin was not the accuser of Servetus, and did not wish to prosecute him.¹

That the reader may understand the manner of man, and the character of the blasphemy of Servetus, we take this single extract:

“If the Word had become flesh, as ‘woman, then they would have called the Word itself the Son of God, and

¹ Nicholas de la Fontaine was named as the accuser of Servetus, with a full knowledge of the rule at Geneva, that if the accused was found innocent, the accuser should suffer the punishment which would otherwise have fallen to the criminal. When it was seen that Fontaine was unequal to the task of handling such a man as Servetus, by request, Calvin became his prosecutor, and agreed to accept the consequences should he fail to convict Servetus.

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the woman herself the daughter of man. Hence the Son of God would have been of two sexes. If the angels, in like manner, were to take asses' bodies, you must allow that then they would be asses, and they would die in their asses' skins; they would be four-footed animals, and would have long ears. So, too, you must allow that were you right, God himself might be an ass; the Holy Spirit a mule, and that he would die as the mule died. O wondrously altered animal!"

WESTMINSTER CONFESSION MALIGNED.

"As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he . . . foreordained all the *means thereunto*. Wherefore *they who are elected* . . . are *effectually called* unto *faith* in Christ by his Spirit working in due season; are *justified*, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power *through faith* unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, *but the elect only*."—*Westminster Confession*, III., 6.

We have taken the above section of the Confession from Dr. Charles P. Krauth, exactly as it appears in his work on Theology. He comments on it as follows:

"According to this article, when the '*means thereunto*' are not, the election is not. But in the Calvinistic system, baptism is not the means of grace, but only the sign or seal of grace (XXVII., 1). What is the means whereby 'elect infants' are effectually called unto 'faith in Christ'? And do infants have 'faith in Christ'? Are they 'justified, sanctified, kept through *faith* unto

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salvation'? Only those who have the means are among the elect, and only the elect have the effectual means. The pagan, Mohammedan, and Jewish adults and infants are of necessity lost. But has even a baptized infant the *means* of effectual calling, of faith, of justification? The Lutheran system says, It has; the Calvinistic system says, It has not. Either, then, the elect infant is saved without means, or there are none elect who die in infancy. But Calvinism denies both propositions, and is involved in hopeless contradiction. Either baptism is properly a means of grace, and not its mere seal, or, according to Calvinism, logically pressed, no one dying in infancy is elect, and *all* infants are lost."—Krauth: *The Conservative Reformation and its Theology*, p. 435.

When the Confession (Sec. X., 3) says, "Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit," the absurdity of Dr. Krauth, charging the Calvinistic system with what he distorts from one section of a standard of that system which is plainly contradicted by another section in that same standard, must be apparent.

But, in trying to show that baptism is a means of grace for infants, and thus establish the claim of baptismal regeneration—which is a doctrine of the Lutheran system, and antithetical to the Calvinistic—Dr. Krauth hits on exactly the logical deduction from the Calvinistic system (though he appears not to have

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seen its force against himself), viz., either infants must be saved by the regenerating power of the Spirit, who works when and wheresoever to him seemeth good, or else baptism must be a means of grace, and only baptized persons can be saved.

If the Calvinistic system holds to the former of these alternatives, it admits of the salvation of all dying in infancy. If the Lutheran holds to the latter, it admits of the salvation only of those who are baptized.

We have not taken this passage from Dr. Krauth's work alone to show the absurdity of his position; but as he has written an essay, in which he has tried to show that Calvin taught infant damnation, and there seem to be some who attach great importance to what he has there written, we feel that the manifest distortion in this passage may suggest possible distortion in wringing meaning from other works on the Calvinistic system, which, we must confess for ourself, we think he has done, and the passages quoted against Calvin will bear out the charge. The more important of these quotations have already been referred to, in what we have written elsewhere, and need not be repeated here.

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Dr. Paul Henry, late of the Berlin University, in giving a resultant of Calvin's teachings, says :

"We ourselves are guilty and answerable for our sins; it is not the punishment of Adam's sin which we suffer, but that of our own."—*Life and Times of Calvin*, Vol. I., page 194.



WILLIAM TWISSE.

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CHAPTER VI.

DR. TWISSE.

We will now consider the views of Dr. William Twisse, the prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly. Dr. Twisse, like Calvin, is arguing with objectors in much of his writing, and consequently is forced to use language he would not use were he discussing the matter in hand, independent of the objections. We have claimed that Calvin, when discussing such subjects as predestination, and the justice of God, uses language, in answering the objectors, that indicates some infants are damned. He speaks of God's justice in such manner that, had he seen fit to have damned every living soul in the infant state, it would not have involved this attribute, since all were justly worthy of eternal death owing to original sin.

In discussing predestination, he finds but two classes: those predestinated to death, and those predestinated to life. When the objectors complained that infants were involved, he did not exempt them; for this doctrine, independent of

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God's revealed will on other subjects, does not. Under regeneration, he does exempt them. Dr. Twisse seems to argue in a similar manner.

THE CRITICS CRITICISED.

Dr. Briggs quotes Dr. Twisse as follows :

" If many thousands,* even all the infants of Turks and Saracens, dying in original sin, are tormented by him in hell fire, is he to be accounted the father of cruelties for this? And I profess I cannot devise a greater show and appearance of cruelty than in this. Now, I beseech you, consider the spirit that breatheth in this man [Heard, against whom he is here writing]; dares he censure God as a father of cruelties for executing eternal death upon those who are guilty of it?"

It must be kept in mind that Dr. Twisse is here arguing against cruelty on the part of God, in a work that bears this title, *Riches of God's Love to Vessels of Mercy Consistent with His Absolute Hatred, or Reprobation, of Vessels of Wrath*. This work was strongly recommended by Dr. John Owen. With such a subject, the language quoted above is consistent with not believing in infant damnation.

Dr. Henry J. Van Dyke credited Dr. Twisse with the following :

" Many infants depart from this life in original sin, and consequently are condemned to death on account of

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original sin alone; therefore, from the sole transgression of Adam, condemnation to eternal death has followed upon many infants."

The *Independent* of August 30, 1900, quotes the same sentence as Dr. Twisse's opinion. The *Literary Digest* of September 29, 1900, does likewise.

Dr. George L. Prentiss says:

"If a single one of the Westminster divines believed that all who die in infancy are elect, and consequently saved, he never, so far as is known, avowed such belief."

It would have been better for Dr. Prentiss to have said, "So far as is known to me."

Dr. Briggs says:

"In the seventeenth century orthodox theologians, so far as I have been able to determine, were unanimous in the opinion that the heathen infants were doomed to everlasting fire."

In answer to all the foregoing, and in particular to Dr. Prentiss and Dr. Briggs, we submit the following. Dr. Twisse says:

"God doth not ordain any man to condemnation before the consideration of sin." . . . "That God of his mere pleasure created all, but of his mere pleasure damneth none, but every one that is damned is damned for his sin, and that wilfully committed and contumaciously continued in by them that come to ripe years."—*Riches of God's Love.*

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In answer to Dr. Briggs we submit the following. Dr. Thomas Ridgley says:

"That he [Dr. Twisse] reckons that controversy relating to the order of God's decrees, to be merely '*Apex Logicus*,' as he calls it, '*A Logical Nicety*,' and adds that his opinion about it is well known, namely, that '*God doth not ordain any man to damnation before the consideration of sin.*'" . . . "That God of his mere pleasure created all, but of his mere pleasure damneth none; but every one that is damned is damned for his sin, and that wilfully committed and contumaciously continued in by them that come to ripe years."—*Lectures on the Assembly's Larger Catechism*.

From this it is clear, at least one man in 1731 thought very differently about Dr. Twisse from Drs. Briggs, Van Dyke, and Prentiss. The first of the foregoing quotations is taken from the same volume from which Dr. Briggs quotes. His failure to mention it, if he has not done so, either shows mental dishonesty or unfamiliarity with writings with which he professes to be conversant. The cockish is such a marked characteristic of some modern-day writers that one hesitates to believe they can be mistaken when he sees them abundantly refuted in the very words of those upon whom they make rash charges.

Dr. Twisse died in 1646, and Dr. Ridgley gives it as his opinion in 1731 that Dr. Twisse

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believed all infants dying in infancy were saved. It seems to us that this should have as much weight as Drs. Briggs, Van Dyke, and Prentiss, giving their opinion in 1890 that he did not so believe.

THE FIGURE OF HYPOTHESIS.

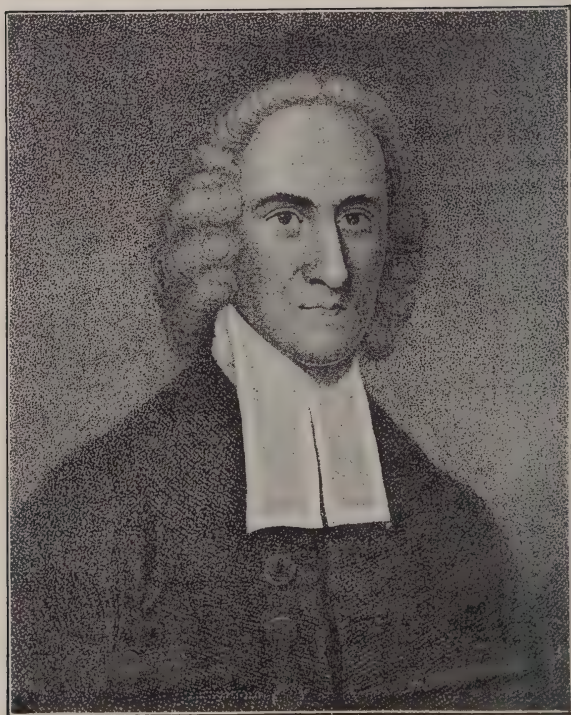
The sentence quoted by Dr. Briggs is clearly hypothetical. Dr. Twisse assumed that all were worthy of death, but admits that if God should consign infants to hell fire, it would have more the appearance of cruelty than anything he could conceive, yet says this would not convict God of injustice and cruelty, since none would receive less than they merit. He maintains that infants are not exempt from eternal death on account of innocency. If this be true, there is no conflict between the sentences quoted by Drs. Briggs and Van Dyke and the quotation used by us. If it is not true, then Dr. Twisse made statements that cannot be reconciled.

Dr. Whitby argues, that according to Dr. Twisse, men might be perfect, and yet they would be damned because God had decreed from all eternity to damn them, independent of good works, and quotes this sentence in proof of his claim:

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“That all, besides the elect, God hath ordained to bring them forth into the world in their corrupt mass, and to permit them to themselves, to go in their own ways, and so finally to persevere in sin; and, lastly, to damn them for their sin, for the manifestation of the glory of his justice on them.”

Dr. Ridgley pointed out the dishonesty on the part of Dr. Whitby, in trying to fasten such views on Dr. Twisse, by perverting this sentence from the plain teaching of the context, and calls attention to the fact that, in the same volume from which Dr. Whitby was quoting a few sentences previous, Dr. Twisse had expressed himself on this matter in language that none could fail to understand. The reference is the quotation we have given. It is needless to state that Dr. Whitby was an Arminian. Jonathan Edwards pays his respects to Dr. Whitby, speaking of him as “This very Dr. Whitby,” charging him with arguing for the “stoics” when they agree with Arminians, and against them when they agree with Calvinists. It is very evident that Jonathan Edwards regarded Dr. Whitby unscrupulous in stating proof for his positions. It may be possible that all the Whitbys are not dead.



JONATHAN EDWARDS.

OF THOSE DYING IN INFANCY.

CHAPTER VII.

JONATHAN EDWARDS.

It is a singular fact that many people have come to regard the Apostle Paul, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards as severe and harsh men, without being able to give a reason for so regarding them. It is undeniable, that if we will search for traits of tenderness, as many will be found in these men as in any others. Paul mentions more friends, and expresses appreciation of kindnesses oftener than any writer of the New Testament. Calvin's letters show a heart that ached for suffering humanity. Jonathan Edwards' works reveal a man as tender as an infant on its mother's bosom; yet it hangs in the air, that Calvin, or Edwards, or some of their disciples, said, "Hell was paved with infants' skulls."

EDWARDS' GREAT CHAPTER ON ORIGINAL SIN.

President Edwards, in writing on original sin, was opposing himself to Dr. John Taylor,

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of England, who was Pelagian in doctrine. It will be well for us to first ascertain the point in dispute, that thereby we may the better appreciate what is said on this subject.

Edwards defined original sin as follows :

“By original sin, as the phrase has been most commonly used by divines, is meant the innate sinful depravity of the heart. But yet when the doctrine of original sin is spoken of, it is but barely understood in that latitude, which includes not only the depravity of nature, but the imputation of Adam’s first sin; or in other words, the liableness of exposedness of Adam’s posterity, in the divine judgment, to partake of the punishment of that sin. So far as I know, most of those who have held to one of these have maintained the other, and most of them who have opposed one have opposed the other; both are opposed by the author chiefly attended to in the following discourse, in his book against original sin.”

We should naturally expect all that could be brought forward in support of innate depravity, and the consequences of original sin, from this starting point. We are somewhat relieved when we are told, that in order to determine whether the natural disposition of the hearts of mankind be corrupt or not, “it is to be looked upon as the true tendency of the innate disposition of man’s heart, . . . when we

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consider things as they are in themselves, or in their own nature, without the interposition of divine grace.”

Every argument that can be made from the sinning of each individual, as soon as age and opportunity allow, is made to do service in proving that the nature was first sinful, and only needed the chance to display the seed of corruption which had been inherited from birth. Imputation is shown to involve infants, not only in ruin, but to make them sinful in the sense that their nature is full of sin, all of which amounts to this :

“If the scriptures represent all mankind as wicked in their first state, before they are made partakers of the benefit of Christ’s redemption, then they are wicked by nature; for doubtless men’s first state is their native state, or that in which they come into the world, but the scriptures do thus represent all mankind.

“But before I mention particular texts to this purpose, I would observe that it alters not the case, as to the argument in hand, whether we suppose these texts speak directly of infants, or only of such as understand something of their duty and state.”

What we shall cite from President Edwards, then, must be taken in view of the fact that he is laboring against one who denied original sin, and, therefore, we should expect the bless-

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ing, under the covenant of grace, to do exactly what President Edwards says it does, viz., it relieves all who do not incur guilt by actual sin. The scriptures would not admit of Dr. Taylor's denial of original sin, and so Edwards accepts the consequences, and also the relief under grace.

If one will read Edwards on "God's Chief End in Creation," "Future Punishments," "The Place of Christ in Redemption," "The Covenant," and particularly "The Propriety of a General Judgment," he will see that Edwards left himself no data upon which to construct a theory of infant reprobation. His teaching on reprobation may be set forth in a single sentence—"But nothing in the decree of reprobation is to be looked upon as antecedent to man's being and fall."

The passages we shall cite will be sufficient to show that Edwards regarded infants as inheriting from Adam corruption of nature, in addition to condemnation.

That the consequences of Adam's sin can be obviated by the merit of Christ, and are obviated in all who are redeemed.

That the judgment to which Christ shall summons men is one where men's works

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determine what nature they are of, or whether they are reprobates or not.

Nothing can be made out of anything Edwards has written on the consequences of Adam's sin to infants, it matters not how horrible these expressions may be, that is not met in the benefits which Christ is able to give through having suffered death for Adam's sin. All any one can say is, that Edwards has made sin to appear exceedingly sinful, but that likewise he has made redemption to appear exceeding glorious.

And so when Edwards makes Christ's judgment of men to rest on their works, while it leaves the question of the state of infants who die in infancy determined by the consequences of Adam's sin, for they sinned in him, it leaves it to be opposed with the merit of Christ; and, therefore, we have affirmed that Edwards left himself no data upon which to construct a theory of infant reprobation.

COVENANT QUALIFIED.

Had Edwards regarded the infants of believers as certainly saved, because of covenant promise, the matter would be different, but he

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distinctly says in his discussion with Mr. Williams :

“Merely persons being born in covenant, is no more evidence of their having moral sincerity than saving grace; yea, there is more reason to suppose the latter than the former without it, in the infant children of believing parents; for the scriptures give us ground to think that some infants have the habit of saving grace, and that they have a new nature given them; but no reason at all to think that ever God works any mere moral change in them, or infuses any habits of moral virtue, without saving grace, but we know they cannot come by moral habits in infancy, any other way than by immediate infusion.”

This puts the matter of infant salvation on the grace of Christ alone, and states the manner of communicating that grace.

In Edwards' chapter on “Original Sin Defended,” he lays down the proposition, “The universal reign of death over all ages indiscriminately, with the awful circumstances and attendants of death, prove that men come sinful into the world.”

Dr. Taylor, whom he was opposing, had argued “that death is brought on mankind in consequence of Adam's sin, not at all as a calamity, but only as a favor and benefit.”

In making the argument *ad hominem*, Edwards depicts death in a way calculated to make

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one shudder, and in describing the consequences to infants—especially in the destruction of the cities in the Old Testament, and particularly the destruction of Jerusalem in the New Testament times—his language, with the exception of that used in the Bible in describing the same events, is without parallel. But when we remember that death is one of the consequences of the fall of Adam, that none escape; therefore, the dying of an adult or of an infant, attended by circumstances that defy description, does nothing more, under Edward's argument, than to prove "that men come sinful into the world."

The misreading of this chapter on original sin has led some men, reputed for learning and wisdom, to stigmatize Edwards' writing in a manner they cannot possibly warrant. Mr. Lecky, in his *History of European Morals*, has indicated that Augustine and Jonathan Edwards, in their writings on infant damnation, have said some of the most inhuman sentiments ever uttered by man. That this is not true of Augustine, many of the unlearned know, since he was the mildest writer of his time in this particular; and that it is not true of Edwards, may be proven by showing that not a sentence

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he ever wrote involves infant damnation, save as it is immediately relieved by Christ's power of regeneration.

ABSOLUTE IDENTITY.

"The purely metaphysical principle to which we call attention is Edwards' theory of identity. This principle is advanced in Part IV. of his treatise on *Original Sin*. The whole human race is really one. We sinned when Adam sinned. Edwards went a step farther than the realists, who believe that we were in Adam, and so sinned with him. He held that we sinned in our own person when Adam fell. It has been a matter of dispute whether Edwards is to be classed with the immediate or mediate imputationists. Hodge thought that Edwards held the doctrine of immediate imputation; Dr. Lawrence, that he held the doctrine of mediate imputation. But it is as easy to ascribe the one to him as the other. His theory of identity did away with all necessity of imputation. Adam's sin was our own personal sin. There is, we think, the same indefiniteness as to any theory of imputation that we find in our own doctrinal standards. Original sin is there called 'corruption.' This 'corruption' is 'extended,' *i. e.*, by natural generation, 'to the whole human race.' Nothing is said as to an imputation of guilt, which we nevertheless believe to be the cause of the extended corruption.

"Because of his theory of identity, Edwards could, consistent with his Calvinistic belief, say that all sin was actual sin. Original sin was literally the person's original sin."—*Presbyterian Quarterly*, April, 1901.

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EDWARDS MALIGNED.

In his booklet, *Elect Infants*, the Rev. J. V. Stephens, D. D., a Cumberland Presbyterian, has this from Jonathan Edwards:

“President Jonathan Edwards (1703-1753) teaches very plainly that some infants dying in infancy are lost. In his *Doctrine of Original Sin Defended* he more than once strongly implies the doctrine of infant damnation. He says, ‘We may well argue, from these things, that infants are not looked upon by God as sinless, but they are by nature the children of wrath, seeing this terrible evil comes so heavily on mankind in infancy. But besides these things, which are observable concerning the mortality of infants in general, there are some particular cases of the death of infants, which the scripture sets before us, that are attended with circumstances, in a peculiar manner giving evidences of the sinfulness of such, and their just exposedness to divine wrath.’ He then cites the destruction of the infants in Sodom, the destruction of the infants of the Midianites by the ‘command of Moses,’ and the destruction of the infants in Jerusalem under the New Testament dispensation. On these instances he observes, ‘And here it must be remembered that these very destructions of that city and land are spoken of in those places forementioned as clear evidences of God’s wrath to all nations which shall behold them. And if so, they were evidences of God’s wrath towards infants, who, equally with the rest, were the subjects of the destruction. If a particular kind or rank of persons, which made a very considerable part of the inhabitants, were from time to time partakers of

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the overthrow, without any distinction made in divine providence, and yet this was no evidence at all of God's displeasure with any of them; then a being the subject of such a calamity could not be an evidence of God's wrath against any of the inhabitants, to the reason of *all nations*, or any nation, or so much as one person.' The reasoning of President Edwards appears to be as follows: since infants frequently suffer physical pain and death because of sin, therefore some of them at least suffer eternal death for the same reason."

Dr. Stephens continues:

"To think of poor little *infants* bearing such torments for Adam's sin as they sometimes do in *this* world, and these torments ending in death and annihilation (as some claim), may sit easier on the imagination than to conceive of their suffering eternal misery for it. But it does not at all relieve one's *reason*." "*President Edwards, as many others of his time, followed a certain method of 'reason' to the unreasonable extent of consigning 'non-elect' infants to eternal misery!*"—*Elect Infants*.

Dr. Stephens says, "The reasoning of President Edwards appears to be as follows: since infants frequently suffer physical pain and death because of sin, therefore some of them at least suffer eternal death for the same reason." At this piece of profundity we pause.

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TRUE STATEMENT.

In the passages quoted, President Edwards was writing on original sin, and its consequences to the race. We shall try to come to the *therefore* by the way that Jonathan Edwards travelled. We have his views clearly stated in the following:

“And God either thus deals with mankind, because he looks upon them as *one* with their first father, and so treats them as *sinful* and *guilty* by his apostasy; or (which will not mend the matter) he, *without* viewing them as at all concerned in that affair, but as in every respect perfectly *innocent*, subjects them nevertheless to this infinitely dreadful calamity. Adam, by his sin, was exposed to the *calamities and sorrows of this life*, to *temporal death and eternal ruin*, as is confessed. And it is also in effect confessed that all his posterity come into the world in such a state, as that the certain consequence is their being *exposed*, and *justly* so, to the *sorrows of this life*, to *temporal death and eternal ruin*, unless saved by grace. So that we see, God *in fact* deals with them together, or as *one*. If God orders the consequences of Adam’s sin, with regard to his posterity’s welfare—even in those things which are most important, and which in the highest degree concern their eternal interest—to be the same with the consequences to Adam himself, then he treats Adam and his posterity as *one* in that affair. Hence, however the matter be attended with difficulty, fact obliges us to get over it, either by finding out some solution, or by shutting our mouths, and acknowledging the weakness and scantiness of our

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understandings; as we must in other innumerable cases, where apparent and undeniable *fact*, in God's works of creation and providence, is attended with events and circumstances, the *manner* and *reason* of which are difficult to our understandings.

"On the whole, if any do not like the philosophy, or the metaphysics (as some perhaps may choose to call it) made use of in the foregoing reasonings; yet, I cannot doubt but that a proper consideration of what is apparent and undeniable in fact, with the respect to the dependence of the state and course of things in the universe on the sovereign constitutions of the supreme Author and Lord of all—who 'gives account to none of any of his matters, and whose ways are past finding out'—will be sufficient, with modesty and sobriety, to stop their mouths from making peremptory decisions against the *justice* of God, respecting what is so plainly and fully taught in his holy word, concerning the derivation of depravity and guilt from Adam to his posterity."

In the next place he says:

"By reason of the established *union* between Adam and his posterity, the case is far otherwise between him and them than it is between distinct parts of individuals of Adam's race betwixt whom is no such constituted *union*, as between children and other ancestors. Concerning whom is apparently to be understood that place (Ezek. xviii. 1-20) where God reproves the Jews for the use they made of that proverb, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'; and tells them that hereafter they shall no more have an occasion to use this proverb; and that if a *son* sees the wickedness of his *father*, and sincerely *disapproves* it, and *avoids* it, and he himself is righteous, 'he

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shall not die for the iniquity of his father; that all souls, both the soul of the father and the son are his, and that, therefore, the son shall not bear the iniquity of his father, nor the father bear the iniquity of the son; but the soul that sinneth, it shall die; that the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.' The thing *denied* is communion in the guilt and punishment of the sins of others, that are distinct parts of Adam's race; and expressly in that case, where there is no consent and concurrence, but a sincere disapprobation of the wickedness of ancestors. It is declared that *children* who are *adult*, and come to act for themselves, who are righteous, and do not approve of, but sincerely condemn, the wickedness of their *fathers*, shall not be punished for their disapproved and avoided iniquities. The occasion of what is here said, as well as the design and plain sense, shows that nothing is intended in the least degree inconsistent with what has been supposed concerning Adam's posterity sinning and falling into apostasy."

SALVATION CONDITIONED ON GRACE.

The following will show the ground on which Edwards places infant salvation:

"There is good evidence that the benedictions God pronounced on Noah and his posterity were granted on a new foundation, a dispensation diverse from any grant, promise or revelation which God gave to Adam antecedently to his fall, even on the foundation of the *covenant of grace established in Jesus Christ*; a dispensation, design of which is to deliver men from the *curse* that came upon them by *Adma's sin*, and to bring them to *greater blessing* than ever *he* had. These blessings

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were pronounced on Noah and his seed, on the same foundation whereon afterwards the blessing was pronounced on Abraham and his seed, which included both spiritual and temporal benefits. Noah had his name prophetically given him by his father Lamech, because by him and his seed deliverance should be obtained from the curse which came by Adam's fall. (Gen. v. 29.) 'And he called his name Noah [*i. e., Rest*], saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work, and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.'

"In what is said here, there is a special respect to the gospel dispensation, as is greatly confirmed by comparing this place with Jer. xxxi. 29-31; under which dispensation the righteousness of God's dealings with mankind would be more fully manifested, in the clear revelation then to be made of the method of God's *judgment*, by which the *final state* of the wicked men is determined; which is not according to the behavior of their particular ancestors, but each one is dealt with according to the sin of *his own* wicked heart, or sinful nature and practice. The affair of derivation of the natural corruption of mankind in general, and of their consent *to*, and participation *of*, the primitive and common apostasy, is not in the least intermeddled with, by anything meant in the true scope and design of this place in Ezekiel.

"But that Noah's posterity have such blessings given them through the great Redeemer, who suspends and removes the *curse* which came through Adam's sin, surely is no argument that they originally, as in their natural state, are not under the *curse*. That men have blessings *through grace* is no evidence of their being not justly exposed to the curse *by nature*; but it rather argues the contrary; for if they did not deserve the

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curse, they would not depend on *grace and redemption* for the removal of it, and for bringing them into a state of favor with God."

Here it is clear that President Edwards exempts infants dying in infancy from Adam's sin—the only cause of condemnation against them—and makes the exemption an argument for the certainty of their guilt under original sin. Only guilty parties stand in need of the benefits of grace, and what benefit of grace could belong to an infant except the deliverance from the curse of Adam's sin, and a renovated nature?

JUDGED BY WORKS.

We wish to set forth yet further the clearness of proof that Edwards did believe in the salvation of all dying in infancy:

"There are two things with regard to which men will be tried, and openly distinguished, by the perfect judgment of God at the last day, according to the twofold *real distinction* subsisting among mankind, viz.: (1) The difference of STATE, that *primary* and grand distinction whereby all mankind are divided into two sorts, the righteous and the wicked. (2) That *secondary distinction* whereby both sorts differ from others in the *same* general state, in degrees of *additional fruits of righteousness and wickedness*. Now the Judge, in order to

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manifest both these, will judge men according to their personal *works*. But to inquire at the day of judgment whether Adam sinned or not, or whether men are to be looked upon as one with him, and so partakers of his sin, is what in no respect tends to manifest either of these distinctions.

“1. The *first* thing to be manifested will be the *state* that each man is in with respect to the *grand distinction* of the whole world of mankind into *righteous* and *wicked*; or, in metaphorical language, *wheat* and *tares*; or, the *children of the kingdom of Christ* and the *children of the wicked one*; the latter, the head of the apostasy; but the former, the head of the restoration and recovery. The Judge, in manifesting this, will prove men’s hearts by their *works* in such as have had opportunity to perform any works in the body. The *evil works* of the children of the *wicked one* will be the proper manifestation and evidence or proof of whatever belongs to the general state of such; and particularly they will prove that they belong to the kingdom of the great deceiver, and head of the apostasy, as they will demonstrate the exceeding corruption of their nature and full consent of their hearts to the common apostasy; and, also, that their hearts never relinquished the apostasy by a cordial adherence to Christ, the great Restorer. The Judge will also make use of the *good works* of the *righteous*, to show their interest in the redemption of Christ, as thereby will be manifested the sincerity of their hearts in their acceptance of, and adherence to the Redeemer and his righteousness. And, in thus proving the state of men’s hearts by their actions, the *circumstances* of those actions must necessarily come into consideration to manifest the true *quality* of their actions as each one’s talents, opportunities, advantages, light, motives, etc.”

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Here he describes God's judgment of men. To this judgment infants would not be summoned, since the ground of judgment is works. All turns on the *state* men are in. He says, "But the proper evidence of the wickedness of men's hearts (the true seat of all wickedness), both as to corruption of nature, and additional pollution *and* *guilt*, are men's works."

The two causes of condemnation are corrupt nature and bad works. The corrupt nature he removes by the perfect work of Christ; there are no bad works to infants, therefore infants must be saved if they die in infancy, according to Jonathan Edwards. If we agree that Christ removes the curse of Adam's sin from infants as infants, then these words are proof positive that Edwards believed all infants dying in infancy were saved:

"And so I say, with respect to the imputation of Adam's sin. The thing meant by the word *impute* may be as plainly and certainly expressed by using other words as if *that* were expressly used; and more certainly, because the words used instead of it may amount to an explanation of this word. And this, I think, is the very case here. Though the word *impute* is not used with respect to Adam's sin, yet it is said, *all have sinned*; which, *respecting infants, can be true only of their sinning by his sin.*"

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In these quotations, we have Jonathan Edwards' complete argument on original sin and its effects on the race, and Christ's redemptive work and its effects on the race. It is clear to us, that if Jonathan Edwards had been asked the direct question, Are all infants dying in infancy saved? he would have answered unhesitatingly, Yes.

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CHAPTER VIII.

PRESENT DAY SLANDER.

The teaching of Edwards on this subject is important now, in that he is made, through misrepresentation, to do service in reviving the old slander that Presbyterians teach "that there are infants a span long in hell"—and is added to in more insulting and slanderous form. Modern fiction is a means of extending what is dishonoring to the teachings of such good and great men as Jonathan Edwards, whose teaching Dr. Thomas Chalmers says helped him "to find his way through all that might otherwise have proved baffling and transcendental and mysterious," and it likewise is the means of making those dishonorable who write either from ignorance or prejudice.

Paul Leicester Ford, in his *Janice Meredith*, represents a Presbyterian mother as changed from a tender, lovable woman into a severe, harsh, unattractive being, and the transformation wrought by two sermons preached by Jonathan Edwards, "in his brief term as

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president of Nassau Hall," convincing her that "her four babies were enduring everlasting torment."

No such sermons can be found among Edwards' printed sermons, and if they were ever preached, they taught what is contrary to his teaching on those subjects where it would be natural for him to declare his belief, if he had any such opinions.

So far as those passages, in his works, about death being due to the curse of sin, the last graphic description of the horrors of physical death is followed by, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death"; and the effect of Christ's redemption, with Edwards, so far as his writings show, might have been the same as those of Henry Rogers.

"The arch-enemy has in this case outwitted himself; he has been even rendering heaven more populous, much against his will, hounding into the everlasting fold the young lambs of the flock, who would otherwise have lost themselves 'on the dark mountains.'"—*Greyson's Letters*.

SOME QUESTIONS.

If we have succeeded in creating the presumption that some of the distinctive men who have moulded the world's ideas on Calvinism

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believed in the salvation of all dying in infancy; and have succeeded in showing that not a single standard of the Presbyterian Church states that there are reprobate infants, we would like to ask the questions—

Why is the Presbyterian Church singled out as holding a *decretum horribile*?

Why is it, that in New York, where the Episcopal Church is strong, it is not singled out, when in its standards it is so plainly taught that infants are damned that the fool who runs may read?

Why is it that a Reformed Episcopal Church, organized to repudiate baptismal regeneration, does not call attention to the fact that the Episcopal Church has not, and does not now, believe in the salvation of any but baptized infants?

What is to be inferred from people's objecting to the creed of the Presbyterian Church for teaching *uncertainly* the eternal destruction of *some* infants, and going into a church that teaches the *certain* eternal destruction of *all* unbaptized infants, of both believers and unbelievers? We give as an answer the following:

“To attack human catechisms and confessions is fairly within our province; to attack them on the plea

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that they are at variance with scripture is but the discharge of a plain duty; but to attack them with arguments which tell equally against the Bible, and which, as used by some, are really meant to do so, is not only to adopt a deceptive line of argument, but it is to give currency to a rationalism, the issue of which can only be the belief of everything or the belief of nothing.—*Wodrow Papers*.

“They are in the right in naming the modish innovations, and opposition to creeds and confessions, *Theologia indifferentifica*. We have an old Scots phrase that sometimes I cannot help applying to them—they love elbow-room. And this is certainly at the bottom of their eagerness against forms of sound words.”—*Bonar*.

THE DOCTRINE.

The importance of having a doctrine deduced from scripture appears to us to have been overlooked by many sincere writers on this great subject of the salvation of infants. We have shown that John Calvin, in teaching infant regeneration, opened a door into the revelation of God which had been barred for generations, by the tenets of the theology of the Roman Catholic Church. The light shone with a brilliancy that lit up all the darkness of the past, and illumined the way for all that were to come after. The doctrine of the regeneration of those who were without every hitherto-known means of regeneration, is the omega as well as

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the alpha of the question of infant salvation. Calvin taught it, and saw the consequences of teaching it. When, therefore, the superficial of our day wish it shown that Luther and Melanchthon doubted if Zwingli could be a Christian and hold to the consequences of infant salvation, they have to resort to such sudden transition in identifying Calvin with them in this view as almost to take one's breath away. "Zwingli was the only one among the reformers who boldly broke through the tradition of centuries, and ventured to express the belief, or strong hope, of the salvation of all infants dying in infancy, and of all the noble heathen, who honestly and earnestly strove after righteousness. Luther doubted whether Zwingli could be a Christian at all with such sentiments. Melanchthon, in the Augsburg Confession, condemns the doctrine that infants can be saved without baptism. Calvin did not shrink from what he himself confesses to be a 'terrible' or 'awful decree,' that 'the fall of Adam, independently of any remedy, should involve the eternal death of so many nations, with their infant offspring,' and he can only answer, 'Such was the will of God.' In another place he says, 'It is quite clear that infants who

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are to be saved—as certainly some of that age are saved—must therefore be regenerated by the Lord.’ ” (J. V. Stephens, D. D.: *Elect Infants.*)

In justice to Calvin, we will arrange his language as he had it, and not as Dr. Stephens has arranged it, “The fall of Adam, independent of any remedy, should involve so many nations, with their infant children, in eternal death,” which is a very different statement.

Calvin never disagreed with Zwingli, as to infants being saved, because he knew his own teachings on infant regeneration went every whit as far as Zwingli had gone. While Zwingli recognized the corruption of mankind, original sin was not regarded as its cause. He did not agree with the theory of free-will of the Pelagians. He acknowledged sin as the source of death of both body and soul, but the universal ruin he traced to the physical relation (*vitium ac morbus*), and not to the federal headship of Adam. Calvin, therefore, only denied the manner of the saving of all dying in infancy, and not the salvation, for this he attributed to Christ by regeneration.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE.

Having the doctrine of the regeneration given us by illustration from the Bible, so that none could fail to understand it, can we find the doctrine applied in scripture in such way as will warrant us in entertaining faith in the salvation of all who die in infancy? We are confident that it is, and cite the following as proof:

“But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. . . . And he laid his hands on them” (Matt. xix. 14, 15).

“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein” (Luke xviii. 16, 17).

“And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever

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shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them" (Mark x. 13-16).

"And said, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3).

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts ii. 39).

The reader may be disposed to consider the passages too few; and, in addition, to be but the same truth told by several of the New Testament writers, instead of one. Both these objections form the basis of our argument. It appears to us that we have two facts in the passages quoted. The first is, we are told what the kingdom of God is like, and who shall enter it. The second is, we are told that the covenant of grace is as extensive as the human family; and if what we have said about the covenant be true, the promise is to all infants dying in infancy.

The record of Christ's acts and teaching regarding this class of persons, the Holy Spirit has had written, not by one, but by several, which we take to emphasize the importance more than a numerous mentioning of the doctrine.

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On the day of Pentecost, Peter said things that he himself did not understand. Therefore, we affirm, on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit said through Peter, "The promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off," and the plain meaning is that the redemption of Christ admits of any, of whatever race, coming to him by faith, and the plain meaning is, also, that any infant, of all who are afar off, dying in infancy, "is regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit."

Afterwards, when Peter saw a sheet let down from heaven, with everything unclean in it, according to the old covenant, he received intimation, by the same Spirit, that the unclean under the old covenant was clean under the new covenant, and he went to the house of Cornelius, and received him and his household into the church, and went to Jerusalem and told the Jews that he had received revelation that their notions were wrong; and though what he had done was against Jewish custom, it was in accord with the grace of Christ, and salvation was for all nations, and the promises for the children of Abraham were for the infants of barbarians and Gentiles.

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THE ARGUMENT APPLIED.

On these two facts alone we have a sufficient basis for universal infant salvation, and we will prove the justness of the claim, from Jonathan Edwards, by the same argument he uses, applied to other matters.

In agreeing with Dr. Taylor, for the sake of the argument, on original sin, Edwards claimed that the infrequency of the mention of a doctrine in scripture proved nothing against it, provided it was ever mentioned so that it could be understood. He said creation was not mentioned often in scriptures, but it was mentioned so that none could deny it. Edwards says more :

“ But if it had been so, that this doctrine [original sin] were but rarely taught in scripture, yet if we find that it is indeed declared to us by God, if held forth to us by any word of his, then what belongs to us is to believe his word, and receive the doctrine which he teaches us, and not to prescribe to him how often he shall speak of it, and to insist upon knowing what reasons he has for speaking of it no oftener, before we will receive what he teaches us; or to pretend that he should give us an account why he did not speak of so plainly as we think he ought to have done, sooner than he did. In this way of proceeding, if it be reasonable, the Sadducees of old, who denied any resurrection, or

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future state, might have maintained their cause against Christ, when he blamed them for not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."

The doctrine of infant salvation has all supplied that is wanted, when we admit that it is a doctrine of the scriptures that infants can be regenerated from the womb, as was John the Baptist.

When the scriptures are read in view of the doctrine of infant regeneration, the whole Bible becomes radiant with this truth. The doctrines of creation and of original sin do not depend on one or many texts, but on the Bible, so the doctrine of infant salvation does not depend on one or many texts, but on the Bible itself.

So, then, if the Bible teaches infant regeneration, without the use of means, as in the case of the adult, and Calvin says the Bible teaches it thus, then Calvin showed his generation what the world once knew, and had lost the knowledge of, by restoring this glorious doctrine to its proper place, and since his day it has been impossible to do more.

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CHAPTER X.

THE CONFESSION HISTORIC AND STATEMENT CLEAR.

The statement of regeneration in the language of the Westminster Confession is explicit and exact when it declares, "Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit."

Notwithstanding, Dr. Schaff says, "The term '*elect infants*' in Chap. X., 3, of the Confession plainly implies, in the Calvinistic system, non-elect or reprobate infants."

As to Dr. Schaff's contention, there is less in it than some have supposed. *Elect* does imply *non-elect*; a correct use of language demands it, and so does a correct understanding of the Calvinistic system. But when it is understood that the Westminster divines were giving an answer to a world which once believed infants must be eternally lost, because there was no satisfactory answer to the question, How are they saved? the answer, "Elect

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infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved," does not imply that there are non-elect infants (*dying in infancy*). The inference is that non-elect infants do not die in the infant state.

Dr. A. A. Hodge says:

"The phrase 'elect infants' is precise, and fit for its purpose. It is not intended to suggest that there are any infants not elect."—*Com. Conf. of Faith*, page 240.

No good can ever come from changing these words, for these two good and sufficient reasons—

(a) The learned have not made war on this statement, but on the doctrine of election. We are of the opinion that Dr. T. C. Johnson, of Union Seminary (Virginia) is entirely correct in his contention as to this, but we think he is equally in error when he denies the scriptures teach the salvation of all dying in infancy.

In proof that nothing will be gained by way of silencing those who are of other faiths, we cite Dr. C. P. Krauth, of the Lutheran Church. He says:

"Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated, and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So, also, are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being *outwardly*

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called by the ministry of the Word" (X., 3). "Faith is *ordinarily* wrought by the ministry of the Word" (XIV., 1). "Here the system comes again into direct self-contradiction. In the face of Chap. III., *a*, it is taught that there is an 'effectual call,' without means, without anything outward, without the ministry of the Word, or sacraments, utterly out of the ordinary channel."—*The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology*.

Without stopping to point out the utter absurdity of such a statement—for Presbyterians will see it, and others will not care for it—we pass on to say, if here is an illustration of what a Christian gentleman and scholar has said about the Calvinistic system, in order to conserve the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, what may we not expect from those who wish to oppose election? Had we not as well join with Calvin, and say as he said, "If one here attacks God's foreknowledge, he inconsiderately stumbles, for if there is any just and plausible complaint, it lies against predestination"?

(*b*) The unlearned will be much more easily reached by some one putting the Confession in a readable form, with such an exposition of its teachings as the untrained mind can readily understand: which has been done with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

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The Confession is historic and true to history. Let us not make it untrue to history by changing its words so as to make its framers imply what they repudiate, viz., infant reprobation.

THE STATEMENT NOT MISLEADING.

But, it is argued, what harm can come from adding an explanatory clause so all excuse for slandering the church will be removed, since it is denied that the Confession so teaches? We, in turn, answer, what good can possibly come from it? Has it not all along been denied that the Presbyterian Church believed it, or that the Standards contained it?

Have we not seen that Dr. Twisse denied it, and said, "God doth not ordain any man to condemnation before the consideration of sin"?

Jonathan Edwards denied it, "But the proper evidences of the wickedness of men's hearts (the true seat of all wickedness), both as to corruption of nature, and additional pollution and guilt, are men's works."

Dr. Lyman Beecher, in the *Spirit of the Pilgrims*, pages 42, 78 and 149, "repudiated, with characteristic energy and boldness of speech, the doctrine of infant damnation."

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Dr. Charles Hodge wrote against the charge, "All who die in infancy are doubtless saved, but they are saved by grace." (*Systematic Theology*, Vol. II., page 211.)

We might conclude with Calvin again, "It is very absurd in these worthy defenders of the justice of God to strain at a gnat and swallow a camel."

The condition of the world is the same now as ever. Sin has involved the race of Adam in eternal death. The Confession simply says, all who have been, are and ever shall be redeemed are elect, and the doctrine, and not the statement of the doctrine, is what revision and amendment will finally get rid of, and then Calvinism will be supplanted by Arminianism.

In 1810, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was organized. That church has largely been limited to the middle west and southwest. It has grown to almost the size of our Southern Presbyterian Church. The name Presbyterian is misleading, for the doctrine of this church is Arminian, and the average man does not distinguish between government and doctrine; yet it takes advantage of every cavil in the Presbyterian Church to propagate itself

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on the ground of being more liberal and reasonable in its doctrines than the Presbyterian Church. In other words, it claims to have all the essentials of Calvinism without its faults. We have lived in the section where this church thrives, and know whereof we speak. The overture sent to the Southern General Assembly asking for a revision of the Confession of Faith came from a presbytery in Texas, and the ministers most in favor of revision are those who encounter the influence of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, which was organized purely on the ground that an educated ministry was not a necessity. This church has taken advantage of the discussion on infant salvation, and is attempting to show that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, at its organization, had in view this difficulty that the Presbyterian Church is asked to confront. The Rev. J. V. Stephens, D. D., has put forth a small volume of 176 pages which states this as a fact.

After the investigation we have been able to give this subject, we have concluded—

First. It was agreed that infants were damned because it was acknowledged that justification must come through hearing the Word and the exercise of faith.

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Second. Beginning with Calvin, it was believed that infants could be regenerated without the hearing of the Word, by the Holy Spirit, in a way that men could not understand.

Third. Those who believed in the regeneration of infants did not believe in the damnation of infants dying in infancy. This is the way we read the history of the belief in the salvation of all dying in infancy. The Westminster Assembly was confronted with the question, How are infants saved? and not, Are there non-elect infants dying in infancy? That Assembly made answer, "Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved." (*Confession of Faith*, Chap. X., 3.) The Confession does not need revision, nor does it need any such weak prop as a "foot-note." The Confession needs nothing. The people need to be taught what the framers of the Confession meant, and that they stated what they meant, and nothing more.

We submit these views in the face of the fact that it is generally conceded Dr. Briggs has a more complete library on the Westminster divines, and knows more about their opinions than any living man. But we submit them in

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the belief that Dr. Briggs has succeeded in giving himself this reputation, and really knows no more about them than other mortals.

The quotation we have given from Dr. William Twisse, put in ordinary men's language of to-day, would be, "When speaking on the decrees of God, it is difficult to give a clear answer to the question of infant salvation, but if you wish to know my opinion, here it is: I believe that God damneth none except those who wilfully commit sin, contumaciously continue in it, until they come to ripe years." Zwingli declared positively his belief; if he believed it, why not others of his time? Dr. Hodge's statement, of which Dr. Prentiss makes so much, is no clearer than Zwingli's. One was made in the sixteenth and the other in the nineteenth century.

Calvin developed the doctrine of infant salvation beyond the point many consider scriptural at this day. He laid the basis of the belief in the universal salvation of all dying in infancy. When we find works on the development of the doctrine of infant salvation, since his time, let us be on our guard, lest we forget the great transition brought about by Calvin in

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opposing infant *damnation* with infant *regeneration*.

It would be very difficult to conceive a clearer statement than this :

“Christ does not there [John iii. 36] speak of the general guilt in which all the posterity of Adam are involved, but only threatens the despisers of the gospel, who proudly and contumaciously spurn the grace which is offered to them. But this has nothing to do with infants. Every one whom Christ blesses is exempted from the curse of Adam and the wrath of God. Therefore, seeing it is certain that infants are blessed by him, it follows that they are freed from death.”—*Institutes*, Book IV.

This is the third citation we have made in showing the positive assertion of Calvin, (*a*) that original sin involved the race in eternal death, and that the condemnation of those who wilfully despise the gospel is eternal death. (*b*) That the curse of Adam and the wrath of God, because of the work of Christ, is no longer a reason for the damnation of infants. Therefore, infants shall not see death. Now, what kind of death? The baby who died yesterday in your home, or in your friend's home, proves that it is not physical death. The hope that is given, from Calvin's writing on the freedom of infants from the “curse of

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Adam and the wrath of God," proves that they are exempted from eternal death. Show us a statement by Dr. Charles Hodge, or any modern theologian, upon which the doctrine of infant salvation can rest more securely than the above. If we are not much mistaken, he who undertakes to do so will search in vain.

We believe God's way of bringing Calvinism to the consideration of the world is by abuse. When we consider the shows given in the pulpit, the superficial men who have ventilated their views in the public press, and the substitutes for the gospel, in the last twenty years, the reason for the present reaction towards Calvinism becomes apparent.

Men will ridicule and abuse Calvinism, when they "have little faith in the supernatural in the very degree that they have lost faith in God; but in days when men are possessed by faith in an all-sufficient Reason, that knows all, and never can be deceived; in an all-sufficient Will, that guides all, and never can be defeated or surprised, then the theology that holds them will be the theology that makes God most real to the intellect, and most authoritative to the conscience." (*The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, Fairbairn.)

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The fine passage from Bickersteth, beautiful in expression, and sound in doctrine as Calvin himself, makes an appropriate conclusion of the matter treated of in these pages.

“ A babe in glory is a babe forever.
Perfect as spirits, and able to pour forth
Their glad hearts in tongues which angels use,
These nurslings gathered in God’s nursery
Forever grow in loveliness and love
(Growth is the law of all intelligence),
Yet cannot pass the limit which defines
Their being. They have never fought the fight,
Nor borne the heat and burden of the day,
Nor stagger’d underneath the weary cross;
Conceived in sin, they sinned not. Though they died,
They never shuddered with the fear of death;
These things they know not, and can never know.
Yet children of a fallen race,
And early to transgression like the rest,
Sure victims, they were bought with Jesus’ blood,
And cleansed by Jesus’ Spirit, and redeem’d
By his omnipotent arm from death and hell;
A link between mankind and angelhood;
As born of woman sharer with all saints
In that great ransom paid upon the cross;
In purity and inexperience
Of guilt, akin to angels. Infancy
Is one thing; manhood one. And babes, though part
Of the true archetypal house of God,
Built on the heavenly Zion, are not now,
Nor will ever be, massive rocks, or fluted shafts
Of columns, or far shadowing pinnacles,
But rather as the delicate lily-work .

OF THOSE DYING IN INFANCY.

By Hiram wrought for Solomon of old,
Enwreathed upon the brazen chapters,
Or flowers of lilies round the molten sea.
Innumerable flowers thus bloom and blush
In heaven. Nor reckon God's design in them
Frustrate or shorn of full accomplishment;
The lily is as perfect as the oak;
And Sharon's roses are as beautiful
As Lebanon's majestic cedar crown."

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